

# **Truth and Tragedy**

## **Nietzsche's Tragic Notion of Truth**

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<p>Tutkielman tavoitteena on tuoda esiin totuuden käsitteen määrittelyyn liittyvä ongelmallisuus. Tutkielma esittelee totuuden käsitteeseen liittyvän, absolutismin ja relativismin välisen ristiriidan, viitaten Simon Blackburnin teokseen "Truth – A Guide (for the perplexed)". Blackburnin esiintuoma totuuden määrittelyyn liittyvä, absolutistin ja relativistin välinen, ongelma on johdanto ja lähtökohta syvemmälle aiheen käsittelylle. Aihetta käsitellään tutkielmassa laajamittaisemmin Friedrich Nietzschen filosofiaan peilaillen. Työssä tuodaan myös esiin kuinka Nietzschen käsitystä totuudesta kritisoidaan usein tuntematta hänen filosofiansa olemusta riittävän hyvin. Työssä tuodaan esiin Michael Allen Gillespien ja Tracy B. Strongin toimittaman teoksen "Nietzsche's New Seas" kautta, kuinka oleellista Nietzschen filosofiaa tutkiessa on ymmärtää hänen filosofinen tyylilajinsa osana kyseisen filosofian sisältöä. Tarkemmin asiaan paneudutaan Gillespien ja Strongin teoksen aloittavan Karsten Harriesin artikkelin "The Philosopher at Sea" kautta. Harriesin ajattelua seuraten esitetään perinteisen akateemisen filosofisen suuntauksen riittämättömyys Nietzschen tulkinnassa. Työssä esitellään myös lukuisien Nietzschen alkuperäisteosten kautta hänen käsitystään siitä, mihin länsimainen totuuden käsitys pohjautuu ja tuon käsityksen ongelmia hänen näkökulmastaan. Tutkielma esittelee Nietzschen filosofiaan liittyvän traagisen ymmärryksen ulottuvuuden, jonka osoitetaan olevan erottamaton osa hänen filosofiaansa. Lisäksi esitellään Nietzschen näkemys kuinka länsimainen kulttuuri on ajautunut ongelmiin Jumalan kuoleman ja nihilismin kautta. Nietzschen filosofialle annetaan työn lopussa positiivinen säväys osoittamalla hänen ennustaneen länsimaisen kulttuurin selviytymistä ongelmistaan uuden filosofien sukupolven myötä. Teoreettisena pohjana tutkielmassa mukaillaan tutkimuskirjallisuuden johdosta mannermaista filosofista suuntausta metafilosofian osa-alueella.</p>			
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# 1. Introduction

"Rather than love, than money, than fame, give me truth." (Thoreau 2004, 321)

This quote from David Thoreau's *Walden* encapsulates perfectly the strive for reason and truth that has in our contemporary world evolved into such great proportions. Chasing the "true essence" of things has a history of circa two millenniums in the philosophy ever since Plato's and Socrates' times. More recently the scientific world has adopted the aspiration for truth as its' primal value and we can see how our daily lives are filled by articles or news that claim their ideas to have a basis on the scientific research, facts. It is not seldom that one hears, even in a regular conversation, a statement, argument or an idea being backed up by the finishing touch of: "...and that is a scientific fact". The idea that we have the scientific facts to back up our daily conducts and beliefs is an extremely comforting and useful one as such. Specially if we think of the order of our societal or social structures, our political and economical systems, our moral conduct and many other different aspects of our lives it is important to share a basing value, a bedrock, that we can rely on when making judgments. With the above quote Thoreau is articulating, not only the aspiration for the truth, but also his concern about the difficulty of obtaining the truth. It is quite easy to argue that, "yes, two plus two is four, and therefore we may obtain the truth" but what is the value of this argument in, for example, the conversation if we should allow death penalty or not? David Hume famously argued that we cannot derive an ought from an is. We may give examples about scientific truth inside a certain frame of reference but when we have more complicated issues at hand, defining the right or wrong conduct, according to the truth behind it, becomes extremely difficult. Yet, we need to rely in the societal structures that dictate the rules behind our daily conduct and define what is right or wrong, what is allowed and not. If the people are expected to share the rules and structures that define the way we ought to act, it seems reasonable that we also have a trustworthy, shared, criteria behind those rules and structures. The contemporary answer, it seems, is the scientific research and reasoning that lies under the ever faster altering societal structures<sup>1</sup>. Relying in to the possibility of certain objective facts in the world needs some sort of validation of truth for the reason and reasoning, be it scientific truth or something more comprehensive.<sup>2</sup> In the

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<sup>1</sup> Education, politics, technology, social networks, world wide web etc. The list of these aspects of our contemporary world is endless.

<sup>2</sup> See e.g. Blackburn 2005, xv.

contemporary world where scientific facts vindicate the global structures it would seem imperative that we may rely on the truth. However, when we explore the philosophical debate about, and around, the truth, we can see that many different traditions and thinkers have tried to give their final touch on what is the truth (and the “true world”) for a long time.

In this thesis we will introduce the great effort of Simon Blackburn in bringing about the nature of the debate about truth in his, aptly titled, book *Truth – A Guide (for the perplexed)*. The exploration concentrates mainly in the debate between absolutists and relativists from different aspects introduced by the guide. I.e., a debate between the absolutist idea of the possibility for an objective truth and the relativist idea that the truth may never be objective. The research question here is derived from a quote (introduced by Blackburn) of Voltaire that “those who can make you believe absurdities can make you commit atrocities”.<sup>3</sup> This drives this research, following Blackburn, to ask the question if we can admit the authority of truth without possessing the truth? The Voltairean idea about the possible atrocities committed by those who are made to believe illusions is taken to be an essential aspect for the valuation of truth and the pursue of objective truth. The debate brought up by Blackburn, however, shows that it is not an easy task to predicate the authority of truth or the objective truth for the relativist. Blackburn operates on the analytic theoretical framework and his exploration about the debate serves as an excellent introduction to the purpose of this thesis. The debate about truth seems to leave us even more puzzled than before and therefore the thesis seeks another point of view for evaluating the nature of truth through Friedrich Nietzsche’s philosophy.

To understand Nietzsche’s philosophy better we will introduce his colorful usage of language through an article *The Philosopher at Sea* by Karsten Harries. His article takes great effort to show the deficiency of one-sided interpretation and critique of Nietzsche. The idea in this thesis is that we may well criticize Nietzsche’s philosophical content from many different aspects. However, many critics of his philosophy lack the will to understand that Nietzsche operates in totally different realm than the usual theoretical framework in philosophy expects. Therefore, also Blackburn’s exploration of Nietzsche’s conception of truth is bound to remain incomprehensive. Blackburn states that Nietzsche thought that there is no truth, that truth is only an illusion. This will be shown to lack the understanding of what Nietzsche’s “theory of truth” is all about. The research will show that Nietzsche talks about a long line of errors in our

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<sup>3</sup> See e.g. Blackburn 2005, 13.

history that have formed us a misguided valuation of truth. We will also explore the dangers that the unconditional search for truth faces in trying to dispel the illusions. We will explore Nietzsche's claims that the unconditional will to truth has killed God and casted us into the abyss of nihilism. The will to truth, in Nietzsche's philosophy, is shown to have its' origins in the same tradition that created the herd morality and the Christian values that he fiercely criticizes. Nietzsche sees these values, and therefore the will to truth, as something that need be revaluated to overcome the abyss of nihilism.

Nietzsche's highly critical evaluation of our (philosophical) tradition combined to his colourful and gloomy usage of language and different styles, may create his readers an extremely negative picture of him and his philosophy. However, understanding Nietzsche as a negative philosopher (or even a nihilist himself) would be a great error. This sort of understanding of his philosophy is shown to be result from the incomprehensive usage of his ideas, e.g. the *Death of God*. If we think of him as a negative philosopher, we are neglecting all together that, in fact, he heralds the overcoming of all the problems that our civilization is facing. One of the key ideas in this thesis is that the tragic understanding is something of an encompassing attitude that Nietzsche has in his philosophy. It runs through his philosophy inseparably and this is shown in how he elevates himself as the last follower of the tragic god Dionysus.<sup>4</sup> The tragic understanding, as we will see, for Nietzsche is the affirmation of life, it is saying yes to life in all of its' faculties no matter how hard they might be.<sup>5</sup> Nietzsche is shown to think of this sort of understanding inevitable for the new breed of philosophers that he was heralding to overcome the problems in our society and initiating the revaluation of "eternal values".<sup>6</sup>

Due to the nature of Nietzsche's philosophy we are bound to operate in the metaphilosophical level. This follows from his controversial and highly critical approach on, not only the main subject of this thesis, namely truth, but also all of philosophy. The controversy in Nietzsche's philosophy, as the research will show, lies in the methods and colorful usage of styles that he applies. Gillespie and Strong point out that "the new approach to Nietzsche begins rather with the claim that we can best understand the meaning of what Nietzsche says by coming to terms with how he says it, that the meaning of Nietzsche's enigmatic utterances can best be

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<sup>4</sup> See Nietzsche 1997, 91.

<sup>5</sup> See e.g. Nietzsche 2005, 109.

<sup>6</sup> See chapter 4.3.

understood by examining the style or the structure of his thought". (Gillespie & Strong 1988, 1) This will be shown to be an intrinsic part of Nietzsche's philosophy and therefore the definition of a theoretical framework becomes extremely difficult. The thesis will show how the traditional academic philosophy is inadequate for the interpretation of Nietzsche's philosophy. This makes it clear, that this thesis need follow a different theoretical framework to have any chance of giving a meaningful interpretation of Nietzsche's ideas. The research will follow the framework of the continental tradition due to the ideas endorsed in the thesis. The objective of the research is to push the idea of Gillespie and Strong further by finishing the thesis with an idea derived from the formation that Karsten Harries gives to the philosophical problem, "I don't know my way about". The finishing argument is that Nietzsche's tragic understanding answers this question with the most comprehensive possible way.



## 2. Truth – The Debate

“What is truth? This question can be seen as one of the most typical of philosophical puzzles.” (Read 1995, 6) Solving that puzzle has proven to be one of the hardest problems and greatest area of debate for our contemporary philosophy. In the book: “*Truth: A guide for the perplexed*”, Simon Blackburn explores the different theories, arguments and ideas about the truth and justification of truth in an extensive manner. In the introduction of his analysis Blackburn states insightfully that: “this is a book about a war of ideas and attitudes” and “the war of words can often turn into a dialogue of deaf” (Blackburn 2005, xxiii-xx). While one explores the *guide for the perplexed* further the above statement is revealed to have a basis in the opposing theories about what the truth really is. Reading the varying arguments and theories about the nature of truth is very similar to that of following a debate of an atheist with a true believer about the existence of God. The debate about the nature of truth has a power to leave the reader even more puzzled than before getting acquainted with the question in the first place. Learning about all the different traditions that are involved in the debate about the truth and how these same traditions construct their theories based in their own definitions is truly confusing. Blackburn quotes Voltaire in a straightforward manner about what kind of problems might rise when taking a stand about what truth is: “Those who can make you believe absurdities, can make you commit atrocities” (Ibid., 13). This quote may be understood as a reference to the power that a certain perspective about truth may have to the ones who support that perspective (idea or an attitude). If the justification of our conduct is based on the definition about truth it is imperative to have a real grasp on what that all underlying truth is. The lag of consensus about justification of one’s beliefs may in extreme cases lead us to the atrocities or at least to indetermination or abstention from any beliefs.

In the *Guide for the perplexed* the opposing theories for understanding the truth include, for example, the oppositions of absolutists versus relativists, traditionalists versus postmodernists, realists versus idealists, objectivists versus subjectivists, rationalists versus social constructivists, universalists versus contextualists and Platonists versus pragmatists. (Ibid., xiii) The main opposition that Blackburn concentrates on is between absolutists and relativists and this opposition will be the basing opposition in this section in purpose of introducing the underlying debate. There are several opposing arguments that shed light to the debate about the nature of truth between the absolutists and the relativists. This section concentrates on

introducing those arguments shortly to give a grasp on what sort of problems we are dealing with in the debate. After the basic debate has become clear we will continue to explore Blackburn's take on one of the fiercest critics of the possibility to truth, Friedrich Nietzsche.

## 2.1 Recoil Argument

One of the most important arguments in the debate about truth that Blackburn starts with is the "recoil argument". In the example he gives, this argument is aimed against the relativist views of Protagoras about the authority of truth. The main idea of this "judo flip", as Blackburn puts it, is to show that the argument of a person recoils on itself. In this case the relativist view that the man is the measure of truth recoils on Protagoras when Socrates states that most of the people take the argument of Protagoras to be false. The continuing argument is that the Protagorean relativists, when denying every authority of the truth but man as the measure are in fact submitting to the very kind of authority that they are trying to deny. The recoil argument is one of the many pitfalls that a relativist needs to avoid when forming his arguments. Blackburn introduces an interesting aspect about Socrates during the exploration of the recoil argument that is well worth of mentioning here. He states that Socrates himself is by no means an absolutist but in fact he questions and questions but never dictates. This, according to Blackburn, shows that you can admit the authority of truth without immediately supposing that you possess it. (Blackburn 2005, 25-29) In the light of the earlier quote from Voltaire this statement appears to be very controversial. How can you admit the authority of truth without possessing it? Admitting this authority without possessing it gives in to the possibility for believing in something that might in the end turn out to be an absurdity. Blackburn, however, states that Socrates is holding firm to that authority. He is saying that Socrates believes there to be a "stamp of truth", independent of us, and that the proper role for us is to submit to that authority of reason. Reason here is translated from what the Greeks called *logos* and this is the word that Blackburn takes to describe it throughout his book.<sup>7</sup> The recoil argument shows that if we argue against the authority of truth we are at the same time admitting that there is some rule or authority by which we can make that argument. The opposition that the recoil argument introduces brings us into the core opposition mentioned earlier, the opposition between the absolutist and the relativist. Blackburn describes this opposition with an analogy, that was mentioned earlier, by comparing the opposition of the absolutist and the relativist (in submitting to the authority of reason) to that of an atheist and agnostic (in submitting to the

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<sup>7</sup> "This is the authority of what Greeks called *logos*, and I shall continue to use the Greek word, not as technical term but rather as a signpost into the whole area, for *logos* can take very different shapes." (Blackburn 2005, 27)

divine authority). (Ibid.) The relativist from the absolutist point of view is a non-believer who needs to be turned into believing to the “stamp of truth”, i.e., the authority of reason. This is the core problem that all the problems introduced in this section revolve around.

The argument that has been introduced here is an argument between Socrates and a follower of Protagoras all the way from Plato’s dialogues. Blackburn, however, gives examples of a more contemporary fashion about how the argument has been involved in the debate about the truth.<sup>8</sup> The essence of the relativist argument, that “man is the measure”, remains the same in these examples and the recoil argument flips the relativist arguments neatly against themselves. The relativist argument “man is the measure” may also easily be extended to “variations lying between one culture and another, or one gender and another, or one language or culture or historical period and another”. This extension Blackburn christens to be the argument from *The Variation of Subjectivities*. The man is the measure argument leaves us in the end with the multitude of appearances, a plurality of worlds. (Ibid., 32-36) The relativist has probably not convinced us that man is the measure but his questioning of the authority of truth has to be taken seriously and explored further to see if there is any basis for admitting that authority.

## **2.2 Moving Bull’s Eye**

To introduce the core opposition more thoroughly let us move on to explore the “Moving Bull’s- eye” problem. This problem comes about when the relativist has dodged the recoil-argument by changing the “man is the measure” argument slightly to saying that everyone has their own truth (i.e. *The Variation of Subjectivities*). Blackburn says this change in the definition is comparable to an archer shooting an arrow to the barn door, then painting a target around it and stating to have hit the bull’s eye. Moving the bull’s eye happens when that archer takes another arrow, flings it across the barnyard to the same door and instead of splitting the last arrow like Robin Hood, he states to have hit the bull’s eye by painting a new target around the arrow. (Ibid., 36-38) It seems quite clear that the bull’s eye may not be moved in this way and similarly the truth may not change according to the eye of the beholder. Blackburn quotes Wittgenstein for arguing against the “everyone has their own truth” statement by saying that: “if everything that seems right is right, that just means that we cannot talk about right at all” (Ibid., 37). Blackburn refers here to an idea that we cannot base our truth on something that is variable depending on our perspective. The truth or rightness of this and that statement cannot

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<sup>8</sup> See Blackburn 2005, p. 30 about Putnam or p. 31 about Rorty.

change according to the speaker who utters the statement. Blackburn forms the same argument once more in another way saying that stating that the truth varies according to the eye of the beholder is similar as to declare that the true position of the rainbow is where it is seen as being when viewed from the garden gate. “The absolutist wants a special validation, an independent seal of authority attaching to his opinions which we have called *logos*. And the relativist claims that *logos* is silent: the absolutist’s cherished authority is fantasy.” (Ibid., 41-42) What Blackburn is saying is that the relativist may not use arguments that refute themselves in varying ways when denying the absolutist’s claim to the authority of reason. The relativist may, however, avoid the moving bull’s eye problem in similar way as he did with the recoil argument. The relativist may give in to some authority of rules. This authority is not the external authority of reason that the absolutist relies in, it is the norms and standards of our own making. In this way the relativist may hold on to a view of manmade authority for truth, as all the opinions are *logos*- symmetrical while the *logos* stays silent. (Ibid., 44) In this way the reason is not an authority itself, there is no heaven for concepts (Begriffshimmel)<sup>9</sup>, but the norms that we abide by are manmade and something comparable to the reason of absolutist. The relativist has been able to alter the bull’s eye problem with the authority that is manmade and something symmetrical with the absolutist’s authority of reason and yet different. However, the relativist view for the subjectivity of truth runs into another problem.

### **2.3 Ishmael’s Problem**

The relativist has dodged the recoil argument and the moving bull’s eye problem, however, yet another problem rises from the view that all the human beliefs are subjective, the “Ishmael’s problem”. Blackburn takes this idea from an Australian philosopher David Stove who expressed the problem as the Ishmael effect according to the story from Moby Dick about a lone survivor from a shipwreck. The story goes that the survivor tells a tale about the shipwreck according to which it would have been impossible for him to survive the incident and in this way the story that is told is undermined by the fact that he is telling the story. This is an analogy for the relativists claim that all human beliefs are subjective – except the claim that all human beliefs are subjective. It is obvious what sort of problems this claim drifts into. As Blackburn puts it, the relativist cannot exempt himself from the fate that he condemns others into. (Ibid., 47) In this chapter Blackburn gets deeper into the analogy of atheist and theist and the existence of God in the relativist and absolutist debate. He states that the debate of the absolutist and the

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<sup>9</sup> See Blackburn 2005, p. 42.

relativist about what is truth may be understood through the separation into the relativist R- truth and R- reasons and the absolutist A- truth and A- reasons. The relativist claims that it is not the same truth that he talks about and that of what the absolutist talks about. The absolutist, on the other hand, states that the truth does exist, and the relativist need be made to see that truth. The absolutists stand is analogical to the theist belief that, if the atheist only could be made to see it, he or she would believe that the God exists. The important question Blackburn asks in this chapter is whether there is a shared mistake that both sides are making in the debate about truth? Suppose that there is nothing in the notion of truth, or even absolute truth, to be contested. This could be a beginning for a truce in the truth wars. (Ibid., 52-55) The solution to the problem is naturally not that simple and Blackburn goes on to explore the continuing debate about truth because the consensus about admitting the authority of truth is yet to be found.

#### ***2.4 Correspondence Theory of Truth***

Blackburn formulates the correspondence theory in following way: “this is the idea that truth may be understood and explained in terms of correspondence with the facts” (Ibid., 56). This idea, however, faces the problem of God's eye view. The problem occurs because “on the one hand we are making a judgement and on the other hand obtaining a ‘sideways’ view of both the judgement and the facts, and measuring how well they match” (Ibid.). The analogy of a map-maker that is often used by relativists and absolutists is given to explain the idea of the correspondence theory. Correspondence with a theory to the truth works similarly to making a map of a landscape and afterwards comparing it to the scenery and telling how well they match. In the case of a theory this means that we may check a theory against observations. Some map-makers just are more accurate than the others, for a reason or another. In the same way some scientists are making more accurate theories in comparison to the others. The problem with this analogy is shown through Kuhn's idea that the correspondence should be measured through the best theories that we have but it is, however, impossible to stand outside of the process to judge it. We would need a transcendent point of view to judge the correspondence and this is impossible. Blackburn quotes Wittgenstein to give a brute image about the problem: “You cannot shit higher than your arse”. (Ibid., 55-57) These statements seem to put us back into the same core problem that has been the discussion so far, the fallibility, i.e., the possibility of an error in our judgment. This is the possibility that the relativist may always grip to tear apart our constructions for the authority of truth. The quote from Voltaire still haunts us with the possibility that all that we base our theories on are illusions or make belief. The debate

between relativists and absolutists is in no way closer to giving us a basis for our claims for what is true and what not and we need to explore further the attitudes toward the nature of truth.

### ***2.5 Minimalists and Moral Relativism***

One of the appealing attitudes, that Blackburn brings about, to the problem of truth is the one held by the minimalists or quietists who think that the truth should be left alone. The minimalists turn their back to the abstraction that the relativist and the absolutist are debating about, i.e. the question of what is truth? The minimalists think of the truth in more of terms of an issue; if the sun is at the highest point at the midday then it is so. The minimalist idea is to try not to find anything more general than the issue at hand needs. (Ibid., 58-60) Instead of general law the minimalist gets into the specific issue. There is no need to find the universal rule about what is the idea of truth or to define the absolute truth. The minimalist idea does not strive to explain the nature of truth in such a manner that it is applicable to every situation, the theory of truth is absent. The minimalist approach, however, brings up yet another important problem into play, the question of a moral truth. This is due to the deficiency of minimalism in solving moral conflicts. Blackburn states that the right of talking about moral truth should not be protected via minimalism. "In morality whatever is different conflicts and minimalism does nothing to diminish the chance of moral conflict." (Ibid., 63) Blackburn argues that in morality we cannot expect to find just a one way to decide issues. In ethics we do not expect convergence about the one true theory of this and that as we do in science and for this the relativism stays in business. (Ibid., 62-63) The problem, for Blackburn, with moral relativism is that it seems too understanding. If we take for example a moral issue that has two arguing perspectives the relativist would say that there is some truth to both of those perspectives. If we take the disagreement to be in between two absolutists, the relativist view that both views are equally important does not help to decide in which way the problem should be solved. It might just be a distraction from the problem. The important question for Blackburn is if the relativist distraction of the issue is a valuable one or a dangerous one? On the one hand the relativist may help us to think of things from a new point of view that helps us to improve the conventional ways of thinking. On the one hand the distraction may just lead into an endless quarrel about the issue at hand. (Ibid., 64-67) The dangers of relativism are described with a practical example of the tide tables and even though it is not a moral problem it describes quite well the problems that might occur from the relativist distraction. The tide tables tell us when the seawater at some place or another is the highest and when the lowest. It is obvious that if there is a market for the tide tables of different sort, the ones that will be proven to be the most accurate are the ones

that will also prevail at the market. When the seafarer is setting his sails through the shallow reef he wants to know when the tide is at its highest to get through the reef without cracking the hull of his ship to the corals. The relativist questioning if the high tide really is at its highest when the tide table says it is does nothing to help the captain to sail his ship safe and sound through the shallow waters. In this case, raising the abstract question of what is the truth of this or that tide table does not help the question. What really matters in this case is if the tide is at its highest when the table says it is. (Ibid., 67-69) In the light of this example we can raise a question if the debate between relativist and absolutist itself is just a distraction to the issue?

The relativist has been able to dodge all the different problems that the absolutist has thrown towards his ideas and the question of the authority of *logos* remains unanswered. It has also been argued that in some sense the questions about the truth are just a distraction to the problem, as we have seen with the example of the tide tables. Still the relativist question prevails: what is the measure of the truth and can we really admit to its authority without possessing it? Let us now turn to Friedrich Nietzsche, to whom Blackburn refers as “the Arch Debunker” and the “patron saint of postmodernism”. (Ibid., 76)

## **2.6 The Arch Debunker**

Blackburn gives credit for Nietzsche as being with us still more than any philosopher from 19<sup>th</sup> century or before. He also calls Nietzsche as the currently most influential one of the great philosophers. He continues that Nietzsche is the philosopher behind the saying; “there are no facts, only interpretations” and that this saying could be taken as the motto for the relativist movement. He sees Nietzsche as the greatest figurehead of the movement since Protagoras himself. The influential status that Nietzsche holds is, according to Blackburn, clear because “it is an axiom of many academic schools and programmes that he has something supremely important to tell us about truth” (Ibid., 75). He says that the problems brought up in earlier exploration about the truth are apparent in Nietzsche's controversial philosophy and interpretations about it. The choice to introduce Nietzsche in a separate chapter at this point of the discussion is made because of the reasons mentioned above. (Ibid.)

Blackburn states that Nietzsche holds it that there is no truth and wants us to believe that there is no truth. Believing something or holding some belief is, as we have seen from the earlier

arguments, plausibly to believe that this something is true.<sup>10</sup> In this way presenting that there is no truth may not be true itself. Blackburn points out that it is not reliable to join Ishmael by stating that all sayings are false except for the statement that there is no other truth than this one. He describes Nietzsche's philosophy being full of statements about cultural defects, religious aberrations and faults in societal constructions. The question is, how can those statements then be taken seriously if Nietzsche himself states that all truths are illusions? Blackburn seems to think that Nietzsche's controversy in the sense of truth and true statements is plausibly a repercussion of his own insecurity in the grasp of truth. He continues that the different interpretations about Nietzsche's inconsistency and controversial philosophy include for example that of Heidegger's. Heidegger thought that Nietzsche tried to deny, what he called *Being*. He thought that Nietzsche struggled with the mysteries of metaphysics and at the same time officially denied them. This, Blackburn says, is something that for Heidegger gives an honorary place for Nietzsche in the tradition that he saw coming to its clear form in his own philosophy. Blackburn continues that another interpretation of Nietzsche is that he was inconsistent but that his inconsistency is something that should be saluted instead of scorned upon. One of the thoughts in this second postmodernist interpretation is that metaphysics is so intimately related to the language that it is impossible to attack it without employing it. Even though one would attack metaphysics, he is bound to use the concepts of metaphysics. The idea is that we should not condemn Nietzsche because of his controversy or self-refutation for it is exactly through these that he operates by playing one position off against another. The interpretations about Nietzsche's controversy are many but Blackburn states that these explanations do not expunge the question that needs to be answered. When Nietzsche is for example stating that the English philosophers are vulgar and the French philosophers are no better, he is at the same time stating that it is true that such places as England and France exist. If he thinks that it is true that there is England and France how can he at the same time say that there is no truth or that the truth is just an illusion? (Ibid., 76-79) This question shows that the approach that Blackburn takes towards Nietzsche's philosophy is tied to the analytical discourse by his definition of the problem. It is worth mentioning that Blackburn carefully chooses which point of his book he takes on to explore Nietzsche's philosophy because of the status that Nietzsche retains among the contemporary philosophy.

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<sup>10</sup> I believe A  $\rightarrow$  I believe A is true.



We saw that Blackburn states that the problems about truth that have been introduced earlier are visible in Nietzsche's philosophy. All the questions that Blackburn has been asking are, however, still unanswered. Blackburn is very critical towards Nietzsche's philosophy but despite his critics he gives the philosopher credit as an extremely influential one in our contemporary philosophy. The purpose of this thesis is to continue to explore Nietzsche's philosophy in a more extensive manner and to see what is so great in the "Arch Debunker". The object for the exploration of his philosophy is to see how Nietzsche describes the problems about the truth and if he really states that there is no truth or that the truth is an illusion, as Blackburn argues. The debate about truth is still ongoing and we will continue to explore Nietzsche's philosophy with the hope of getting a better answer from him. Before diving into the depths of Nietzsche's philosophy it is, however, essential to understand his controversial style of philosophizing. In the next section we will explore the nature of his philosophy in more detail.

### 3. Uncharted Territories

If there would be one thing that we had to point out from Nietzsche's philosophy to describe his style, it would certainly be the one that also Blackburn mentions in more than one passage in his book, controversy. This is one of the reasons why Nietzsche is so easy to love, or to hate, to quote or criticize. Blackburn argues that the tendency to think that Nietzsche would have been a "destructive force, a kind of stormtrooper for nihilism, atheism or even Nazism, a prophet of all that has been godless and destructive since his time" <sup>11</sup> is grievously misguided. Nietzsche's philosophy is destructive only in the sense that he thought that our civilization had taken a wrong direction. Nietzsche uses the expression that is often taken as a negative one, the "philosophizing with hammer", not as a destructive analogy. Instead he refers to the critical philosophy as the hammer "like a tuning fork that shows what in our civilization is in tune and what is not". (Ibid., 79) The peculiarity in Nietzsche's style has had the power to divide the opinions about his philosophy since his own lifespan till now and it is important to explore this controversy thoroughly. In the Routledge published book about Nietzsche Richard Schacht states that there is hardly any part in Nietzsche's philosophy that is more confusing than: "his treatment of truth, knowledge and certain matters relating to them" (Schacht 1983, 52). The contemporary interest and importance around specifically these issues, however, may well be the greatest. (Ibid.) In the introduction for the book *Nietzsche's New Seas* the editors Gillespie and Strong argue that the new approach to Nietzsche is that we should not at first look that much in to the content of what he is saying. Instead we can best understand the meaning of what he is saying by coming in to terms with how he says it. To understand Nietzsche's "enigmatic utterances" it is best to examine the style or the structure of his thought. (Gillespie & Strong 1988, 1) The confusing nature of Nietzsche's philosophy makes it quite clear that before getting into the exploration of his ideas we need to prepare ourselves with some understanding of his style of philosophizing and this chapter takes it on to do just that.

In this chapter we start by exploring Nietzsche's controversy through the perspective of Karsten Harries who tries to give a credit to Nietzsche's colorful expression in her article *The Philosopher at Sea*. The reason for choosing just this article for the purpose is because he argues

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<sup>11</sup> See Blackburn 2005, 79.

that understanding Nietzsche from just a certain point of view (e.g. analytical philosophy) is not comprehensive enough. Harries' article is also the opening article for the Gillespie & Strong edited book that follows the important sentiment that it is essential to understand Nietzsche's style of philosophizing before getting into the content. That sentiment is something that is lacking from Blackburn's critical exploration of Nietzsche. Later we will understand how that sort of interpretation or criticism of Nietzsche's philosophy inevitably stays one-sided. Harries gives Nietzsche a status of a seafaring discoverer, or a new Columbus, a philosopher who set the sails for uncharted seas. (Harries 1988, 21) This analogy brings about the nature of Nietzsche's philosophy in somewhat appropriate manner in comparison to the earlier exploration about the nature of truth. Harries sees Nietzsche as the pioneer in the new seas of philosophy that had been uncharted before him.

### ***3.1 The New Columbus***

Harries starts her exploration of the uncharted territories with a critical overview of a, slightly unattached, quote from Arthur Danto's work about Nietzsche. The quote describes the unique nature of Nietzsche's philosophy as it follows: "His language would have been less colorful had he known what he was trying to say, but then he would not have been the original thinker he was, working through a set of problems which had hardly been charted before. Small wonder his maps are illustrated, so to speak, with all sorts of monsters and fearful indications and boastful cartographic embellishments." (Harries 1988, 21) This argument ties Nietzsche's originality as a philosopher to his, claimed, failure of not knowing what he was doing. Danto's idea about Nietzsche, according to Harries, is based on the aspect that philosophy in the contemporary analytic sense has no room for the monsters that Nietzsche found from the uncharted territories because now we have a better understanding about what the philosophical sea chart should look like. Harries raises a question if the seas that Nietzsche was trying to chart are really known by now as well as Danto claims? (Ibid.) The same problem that she points out from Danto's thoughts, about Nietzsche not knowing what he was trying to do, was also shown to be one of Blackburn's concerns earlier. The concern was about Nietzsche's own grasp of truth and if his poor grasp of it could explain the controversial approach to truth in his philosophy. In the chapter about the correspondence theory of truth Blackburn's analogies of the map making and tide tables were used in the purpose of exploring the nature of truth. In this light Harries' analogy of the seafarer seems appropriate to start the exploration about the question if Nietzsche knew what he was doing, and if he had a grasp of truth himself? Let us assume the position that Nietzsche was the pioneer seafarer in the unknown seas. In this

light the question here is, if Nietzsche's nautical charts still carry a purpose in explaining those uncharted territories? Or is Danto right in saying that the philosophy is a great deal more familiar with the, at that time, uncharted territories? In the purpose of finding an answer to these questions we will also explore another question that Harries asks in his article: do we know what makes a discourse philosophical? This question according to Harries is related to Danto's background in analytic philosophy. Harries states that from Danto's perspective of contemporary analytical philosophy the "color of Nietzsche's prose is tied to what makes it non-philosophical". (Ibid) This is why it is important to understand Harries' idea of what is philosophical, what makes a discourse philosophical.

An important problem for Harries is whether we can be the readers that Nietzsche's works "deserve" or whether we even want to be such readers? He claims that, "this seafarer's monstrous texts demand monstrous readers". He has the point of view that the works of Nietzsche may be read from the perspective of (e.g.) contemporary analytical philosophy but this style may not give justice to his philosophy because his style has to questions the analytical approach. Nietzsche may also be read from some other contemporary perspective, e.g., Heidegger's fundamental ontology but these ways of reading Nietzsche, however, are not comprehensive enough. He claims that this sort of perspectives does not give justice to Nietzsche's monstrous texts. The difficulty, for Harries is, "trying to domesticate Nietzsche's monstrous texts by translating them into a philosophical idiom with which we are more at home and therefore more comfortable". He thinks that what makes Nietzsche a philosopher is that his philosophy puts the philosophy guarded by professional philosophers in question by its' style and thinking. The styles of Nietzsche's philosophy may be appropriated but not adequately understood by the contemporary perspectives mentioned above. In the purpose of defining what a philosophical discourse is all about Harries gives a form to the philosophical problems by quoting Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*: "I don't know my way about". He continues that if this is the form of a philosophical problem then Nietzsche certainly qualifies as an explorer of philosophy. Harries separates other problems from philosophical ones by saying that not all problems of this form are philosophical. It most certainly is different to have lost one's way in for example an unfamiliar city than not knowing your own way in the philosophical sense. Philosophy is a critical enterprise, the kind that asks questions of where one is standing, what is the basis for one's place and surroundings. It is this sort of critical contemplation of one's surroundings that leads Harries to think that philosophy remains alive only as long as the question, What is man's place, his ethos? continues to be asked. (Ibid., 22-24)

Harries' idea is that philosophy needs to be critical and being philosophical means to question one's "environment"<sup>12</sup>. In philosophical understanding the basis we stand on is constantly questioned and redefined. One's place, the ethos, and what has led to that ethos needs constant exploration, definition and justification. Harries argues that what is man's place, his ethos? is the question that Nietzsche's philosophy makes one ask when facing the usage of his colorful prose. This is the question that raises when facing the monsters of the uncharted seas. Harries thinks that in the core of philosophy is the ethical concern born of the demand that we assume the responsibility of our actions. The question, what is one's place raises a need for the historical situatedness, the continuation of one's place from a "tradition" or another. He states that Nietzsche's philosophy challenges, not only the philosophers that feel confident of their place and way, but also our common sense and this causes the fear associated with his ideas. This is a risk that one need be prepared to take when trying to grasp the philosophy of Nietzsche. (Ibid.) Harries thinks that, "we serve Nietzsche ill, when refusing his challenge, we try to show that there is a quite acceptable sense behind such apparent nonsense". (Ibid.) Nietzsche's colorful expression of prose and his controversy does not undermine the influence of his philosophy, it only makes it harder to grasp. Harries points out that Nietzsche thought that all he has written is a riddle that may only be solved by a new breed of readers. (Ibid.) Let us quote Nietzsche here from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*:

"Why so hard!" – the kitchen coal once said to the diamond. "Are we not close relatives?"

Why so soft? Oh my brothers, this I ask you: for are you not – my brothers?

Why so soft, so retiring and yielding? Why is there so much denying and denial in your hearts? And so little destiny in your gazes?

And if you do not want to be destinies and inexorable, how could you triumph with me?

And if your hardness does not want to flash and undo and cut through, how could you one day create with me?

The creators are hard after all. And it must seem like bliss to you to press your hand upon millennia as if upon wax –

– bliss to write upon the will of millennia as if upon bronze – harder than bronze, more noble than bronze. Only the most noble is perfectly hard.

This new tablet, my brothers, I place above you: *become hard!* –  
(Nietzsche 2006a, 172)

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<sup>12</sup> Here the environment is used (also) in the abstract sense of the environment that is in the basis of one's philosophical understanding.

With the above dialogue from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* Nietzsche ends the *Twilight of The Idols* in the section *The Hammer Speaks*<sup>13</sup> by describing his final thoughts about philosophizing with the hammer, the critical style of his philosophy. He is painting a picture of the qualities that his readers and fellow philosophers are expected to possess. If one is willing to accept the challenge that Nietzsche puts in front of us, we need the tough characteristics of a diamond instead of the yielding nature of the kitchen coal. The critical philosophy, philosophizing with the hammer, is most certainly not for everyone to endure and Nietzsche brings this about with his analogy in a quite explicit manner. If we are to grab the tuning fork and see what in our surroundings is in tune and what is not, we need to be ready to answer Nietzsche's challenge and to take this new tablet seriously, we need to "become hard".

We have seen how Harries argues about what makes a discourse philosophical. It is the question, what is ones' place, ones' ethos and the exploration that this question leads to. Harries argues that Nietzsche's philosophy is philosophical precisely in the sense that it questions the composition of the prevalent structures. It questions the adopted values and assumptions, the issues that no one else might not even think to question. If we were talking about a philosopher of lesser influence to our contemporary understanding than Nietzsche, we might just pass his critical philosophy as meaningless defiance of the society or fruitless rattling of the cage. His contemporary influence, however, calls us to take a closer look at how he uses the hammer and what are the structures that he finds to be out of tune. It was said earlier that Nietzsche's philosophy should not be read by the content that it holds but primarily by the form and styles that he expresses his ideas with. However, if we take Harries to be correct about what makes a discourse philosophical, what defines ones' ethos, we may argue that the content of the philosophy is equally important for defining Nietzsche's ethos. The purpose of this thesis is to find out where Nietzsche stands on the matters about truth and consequently it is imperative to understand the structures and developments behind his grasp of truth, if he has one. Therefore, in the next section we will step in to what Nietzsche saw as the greatest errors of our civilization and how these errors according to his philosophy have constituted.

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<sup>13</sup> See Nietzsche 1997, 92.

### 3.2 Towards A Catastrophe

We have touched a few times upon Nietzsche's idea that the western culture has been heading to a wrong direction. Let us now turn into a more thorough exploration of Nietzsche's genealogy about the shortcomings of the western civilization that he described with the following passage:

"For some time now, our whole European culture has been moving as toward a catastrophe, with tortured tension that is growing from decade to decade: restlessly, violently, headlong like a river that wants to reach the end, that no longer reflects, that is afraid to reflect." (Nietzsche 1967, preface)

The above quote seems exacerbated and gruesome but when reading Nietzsche, we need be prepared to this sort of style in his expressions. Instead of trying to find a way to dilute the gruesomeness of what he is saying let us become hard, as Nietzsche asks us to, and dive in it headlong to find out what are the structures behind this sort of view.

Blackburn states in his guide to truth that Nietzsche sees the origins of the Western metaphysics that he criticizes in Plato. More precisely the origin is in the opposition that Plato created to the merely "apparent" world of ordinary life and the "true" world of the enlightened. This tradition is where Nietzsche turns his critical gaze, his hammer, to see what is in tune and what is not. Blackburn uses the classical cave analogy to clarify the separation of the apparent and true world: The apparent world is the world we live in within the cave, thinking that it is the real world, but the true world lies outside the cave for the enlightened to find. The true world holds the timeless unchanging truths, as the apparent world is only shadows of those eternal truths, ideals. Further on, he continues, in the second stage the Platonic opposition is Christianized. In this way the true world is made available to all the people who believe and abide by a certain set of norms and they shall enjoy that "true" world after the purgatory of this life in the heaven. Blackburn refers to this idea of Nietzsche as the de-intellectualizing of Plato. After the Christianization and the promise of afterlife, as Blackburn describes Nietzsche's philosophy, "Kant is beautifully placed as kind of pallid lapsed Christian", who maintains the views shared by Plato and Christianity. The views that an understanding out of ordinary is needed to attain the true standards and imperatives of conduct to protect morality in this way. (Blackburn 2005, 79-81) Nietzsche describes Kant's part in transforming reality into appearance in his work *Antichrist* as follows: "Reason, the right of reason, does not extent that far . . . Reality was made into 'mere appearance'; a complete lie called 'the world of being' was

made into a reality . . . Kant's success is just a theologian success.” (Nietzsche 2005, 9) In the preface to his work *Beyond Good and Evil* Nietzsche describes Plato's invention of pure spirit and the “Good in itself” as the most dangerous dogmatist's error. (Nietzsche 2002, Preface) If we want to have a grasp about what Nietzsche saw as the errors of the worldview in question, we need backtrack a little and get to the bottom of the values on which he thought it is based on.

According to Nietzsche the platonic “true” world that was unreachable for senses, as we have seen, transformed into the Christianized “true” world of afterlife (I.e. heaven). Nietzsche talks about the moral problem as the problem of “faith” and “knowledge” or the problem of instinct and reason, the problem of authority between these two. He says that since Plato the instinct, “the faith” (for Christians), “the herd” (for Nietzsche himself), has had the upper hand in the matters of morality. (Ibid., 81) With the herd Nietzsche refers to what he sees as the authority of morality in the Europe (and the countries effected by Europe) of his time. He is saying that the morality of Europe is that of a herd animal and in this way deviating from what is common conduct in the herd is disapproved. He talks about slave morality that has inverted the values to suit the herds interests in the expense of those that are strong or deviate from the herd in any way, even (e.g.) those who might have an exceptional ability for reasoning. This is the morality of Christianity and the society has adopted the herd morality with such a level that Nietzsche sees even the democratic movement as the heir to Christianity. (Ibid., 84-90) Nietzsche talks about the European values as the values that have developed ever since the times of Socrates through the philosophy of Plato and the Christianized Plato. We have seen that for Nietzsche these values go as far as to form our societal structures through the European political system. We need not go far to find other thinkers who argue similarly about our European social, political and economic structures<sup>14</sup> but this is a matter for a different research.

The idea of the slave morality is explored more closely in Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morality*. He talks about the “slaves' revolt in morality” that has two thousand years of history and has only been lost sight of because it was victorious. (Nietzsche 2006b, 18) Nietzsche sees the Christian morality, the slave morality, as opposed or adverse to the “noble morality”. The noble morality “grows out of a triumphant saying ‘yes’ to itself, slave morality says ‘no’ on principle to everything that is ‘outside’, ‘other’, ‘non-self’: and *this* ‘no’ is its creative deed”. He

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<sup>14</sup> See e.g. Max Weber: *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.



sees the beginning of slaves' revolt in the morality occurring when "*ressentiment* itself turns creative and gives birth to values". Nietzsche sees this as a reversal of the evaluating glance, and it is the "essential orientation to the outside instead of back onto itself" that is a feature of *ressentiment*. The action of slave morality is a reaction in the way that it needs an opposing, external world in order to come about. It needs external stimuli in order to act at all. (Ibid., 20) This is to say that the culture that is based on this sort of morality is an extremely displacive one for the individual divergence. Nietzsche goes even further and says that the herd or slave morality that is the prevalent one in Europe does not only displace the individual divergence but considers this act as a creative deed. If we take this idea one step further and combine it with what was said before, it becomes quite gruesome. We know that this morality basis on the assumption that if you have faith to the transcendent<sup>15</sup> authority and abide by its norms you will reach the *true world* of afterlife. This belief system seems to be structured in such a manner that it makes it virtually impossible to question it. This is because if one would question it, he or she would, not only be excluded from the community but could never reach the true world of afterlife, the heaven. This sort of system is most certainly favourable to the *status quo* but we can imagine many individual situations when it might be unfavourable. The truth, or the true world, that Plato defined as something that you can reach with reason had altered to the true world that you can reach by having faith to the norms dictated by the transcendent being, God. This is the God that Nietzsche talks about in his work *Antichrist* as the deification of nothingness, as the canonization of the will to nothingness. He sees Christianity intrinsically as a *nihilistic* religion. (Nietzsche 2005, 16)

We have now explored the structures that Nietzsche saw as the rotten constitute of the European values. How the will to nothingness had grown ever since Plato's times till what had become a Christianized world view and a belief in the transcendent authority of God. The authority that we could not see or touch but just had to blindly believe in to attain the eternal life in the "true world" of afterlife. The thesis has come to the phase where the yearning of truth will be shown to have tremendous consequences. Nietzsche saw that the chase for truth would lead to an immeasurable event. This event would be so great that it would take a long period of time for people to understand the effects that it carried with it, namely the death of God.

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<sup>15</sup> Merriam-Webster definition: 1. a. exceeding usual limits b. extending or lying beyond the limits of ordinary experience c. *in Kantian philosophy* : being beyond the limits of all possible experience and knowledge

### 3.3 *The Death of God*

The death of God may well be the most known idea from Nietzsche's philosophy. Unfortunately this idea, which Nietzsche was trying to express in his work *Gay Science* through the section titled *The Madman*, is often reduced to incomplete quotes or supposedly ironic and witty aphorisms. Those interpretations have no respect for the seriousness in which Nietzsche took this event and the concern that he had about what would happen after it. Let us start by giving the quote of the madman here in full as it should be presented:

*The madman.* – Haven't you heard of that madman who in the bright morning lit a lantern and ran around the marketplace crying incessantly, 'I'm looking for God! I'm looking for God!' Since many of those who did not believe in God were standing around together just then, he caused great laughter. Has he been lost, then? Asked one. Did he lose his way like a child? Asked another. Or is he hiding? Is he afraid of us? Has he gone to sea? Emigrated? – Thus they shouted and laughed, one interrupting the other. The madman jumped into their midst and pierced them with his eyes. 'Where is God?' he cried; 'I'll tell you! *We have killed him* – you and I! We are all his murderers. But how did we do this? How were we able to drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What were we doing when we unchained this earth from its sun? Where is it moving to now? Where are we moving to? Away from all suns? Are we not continually falling? And backwards, sideways, forwards, in all directions? Is there still an up and a down? Aren't we straying as though through an infinite nothing? Isn't empty space breathing at us? Hasn't it got colder? Isn't night and more night coming again and again? Don't lanterns have to be lit in the morning? Do we still hear nothing of the noise of the grave-diggers who are burying God? Do we still smell nothing of the divine decomposition? – Gods, too, decompose! God is dead! God remains dead! And we have killed him! How can we console ourselves, the murderers of all murderers! The holiest and the mightiest thing the world has ever possessed has bled to death under our knives: who will wipe this blood from us? With what water could we clean ourselves? What festivals of atonement, what holy games will we have to invent for ourselves? Is the magnitude of this deed not too great for us? Do we not ourselves have to become gods merely to appear worthy of it? There was never a greater deed – and whoever is born after us will on account of this deed belong to a higher history than all history up to now!' Here the madman fell silent and looked again at his listeners; they too were silent and looked at him disconcertedly. Finally he threw his lantern on the ground so that it broke into pieces and went out. 'I come too early', he then said; 'my time is not yet. This tremendous event is still on its way, wandering; it has not yet reached the ears of men. Lightning and thunder need time; the light of the stars needs time; deeds need time, even after they are done, in order to be seen and heard. This deed is still more remote to them than the remotest stars – *and yet they have done it themselves!*' It is still recounted how on the same day the madman forced his way into several churches and there started singing his *requiem aeternam deo*.<sup>16</sup> Led out and called to account, he is said always to have replied nothing but, 'What then are these churches now if not the tombs and sepulchres of God?' (Nietzsche 2001, 119-120)

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<sup>16</sup> "Grant God eternal rest" (See Nietzsche 2001, 120)

Nietzsche may be argued to have been one of the keenest critics of Christianity and religion in general. However, the passage above indicates his palpable concern about what happens to the world when it has been relieved from the authority behind its' morality, herd morality or not. Nietzsche is in no way delighted about the developments that have lead us to be the murderers of the God. Instead we can see the deep concern that he shows for the world after "the holiest and the mightiest thing the world has ever possessed has bled to death under our knives". It also becomes clear that he thought that people would not understand what this event meant and would mean for us for a long time to come. "What were we doing when we unchained this earth from its sun? Where is it moving to now? Where are we moving to? Away from all suns? Are we not continually falling? And backwards, sideways, forwards, in all directions? Is there still an up and a down? Aren't we straying as though through an infinite nothing?" (Ibid., 120) Nietzsche saw that if the authority of God behind our morality disappears we are left with no one to show us the direction. We are left in the middle of "infinite nothing". In the passage of the mad man we can see how the ones who do not believe in God, the atheists, are taking the message that the mad man is trying to express as a joke. Nietzsche is saying that they clearly have no understanding about what it means that the authority behind their values has disappeared. Nietzsche's concern of what would happen after the death of God is great but, as the keenest critic of the status quo that preceded the death of God, he also saw hope in it. This hope he expresses with the following passage:

Indeed at hearing the news that 'the old god is dead', we philosophers and 'free spirits' feel illuminated by a new dawn; our heart overflows with gratitude, amazement, forebodings, expectation – finally the horizon seems clear again, even if not bright; finally our ships may set out again, set out to face any danger; every daring of the lover of knowledge is allowed again; the sea, *our* sea, lies open again; maybe there has never been such an 'open sea'. (Nietzsche 2001, 343)

The open seas would, however, need wait for a long time because the structures that have been in place for such a long period of time would not perish overnight. Nietzsche expresses this with the words of the mad man: "lightning and thunder need time; the light of the stars needs time; deeds need time, even after they are done, in order to be seen and heard. This deed is still more remote to them than the remotest stars [...]". (Ibid., 120) In another section of *Gay Science* he is talking about the tendency of people for appreciating the shadows of past things long after they are gone. He is saying that even though God is dead his shadows may be showed in the caves

still even for a millenia. It is not enough that we have killed God himself but we must still defeat his shadow as well. (Ibid., 109)

Nietzsche thought that the Christian values were inverted and intrinsically *nihilistic*. In the Christianized Platonism the authority of God is the only thing that the values stand on and in this world God is also the truth and the authority of truth. We have seen how Nietzsche describes the state of our European culture and the developments that have led to the structures that he is criticizing. Nietzsche's grasp on truth was questioned earlier by Blackburn and again by the arguments from Danto, introduced by Harries. Now, that the philosophical discourse under which Nietzsche operates has been introduced in the essential aspects to the issue at hand, we may proceed to describe his conception of truth more distinctively. It is the "will to truth" that Nietzsche questions, he asks why do we will the truth, why do we value the truth so much and should we, in fact, value it? The Christian world saw God as the truth but paradoxically Nietzsche is saying that it is the will to truth that has driven us to kill Him. The will to truth is one of the essential aspects in Nietzsche's theory of truth, if we may say that he has a theory of truth. The purpose of this thesis is to find out what kind of grasp Nietzsche holds of truth. In the following section the idea is to show that he, indeed, has a grasp of truth but he questions the value of the unquestioned pursue for it.

### 3.4 *Will to Truth*

We saw earlier how Blackburn argued that Nietzsche wants us to believe that there is no truth, that truth is an illusion. It is, however, not that straightforward that Nietzsche was really saying that there is no truth. He was, rather, questioning the way we have learned to understand the truth and value it. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* Nietzsche describes the challenge of being true in the following way:

To be true – this few *can* do! And whoever can, does not yet want to! But least of all the good can do it. Oh these good! – *Good people never speak the truth*; for the spirit, being good in this manner is a disease. They give way, these good, they give themselves up, their heart repeats words, their ground obeys; but whoever obeys, *he does not hear himself*! Everything that the good call evil must come together, in order to give birth to one truth; oh my brothers, are you also evil enough for *this* truth? Audacious daring, long mistrust, the cruel no, surfeit, the cutting into what is alive – how rarely *this* comes together! But from such semen – truth is begotten! *Side by side* with bad conscience all *science* has grown so far. Break, break me these old tablets, you seekers of knowledge! (Nietzsche 2006a, 160)

In the above quote we can see how the conception of 'good' is in Nietzsche's philosophy tied to the conception of truth, how the ones that are good can least of all be true. In chapter 3.2 it was described how Nietzsche saw Plato's creation of the 'Good in itself' as a great error. In the above quote he takes on this same issue in another way. It becomes clear how intertwined and inverted Nietzsche saw the conceptions of truth and good and evil. It is exactly what the good call evil that must, according to Zarathustra here, come together in order to give birth to one truth. In this passage Zarathustra is talking about the "bad conscience" and how science has side by side grown with it. This is the same bad conscience that Nietzsche saw behind the herd morality, behind the inverted values of Christian worldview. Let us get back to one of our original questions about truth here, if we can (like Socrates) admit the authority of truth without possessing it? Nietzsche is saying that this is exactly what we are doing, tempted by our *Will to Truth*:

The Will to Truth, which is to tempt us to many a hazardous enterprise, the famous Truthfulness of which all philosophers have hitherto spoken with respect, what questions has this Will to Truth not laid before us! What strange, perplexing, questionable questions! It is already a long story; yet it seems as if it were hardly commenced. Is it any wonder if we at last grow distrustful, lose patience, and turn impatiently away? That this Sphinx teaches us at last to ask questions ourselves? WHO is it really that puts questions to us here? WHAT really is this "Will to Truth" in us? [...] We asked about the *value* of this will. Granted, we will truth: *why not untruth instead?* (Nietzsche 2002, Part I, 1)

Nietzsche wants to know what is that unconditional will to truth which drives us to think that the truth is something worth pursuing for and why do we not prefer untruth instead? This question is generated from his idea that the cultivation of the scientific spirit needs a prior conviction to begin. A prior conviction which is so "authoritative and unconditional that it sacrifices all other convictions to itself". In this way there is no 'presuppositionless' science and science is resting on a faith. The answer to the question if *truth* is necessary is 'yes' and this answer according to Nietzsche must be so firm "that it takes the form of the statement, the belief, the conviction: '*Nothing* is *more* necessary than truth; and in relation to it, everything else has only secondary value.'" Nietzsche thinks the truth and untruth are both useful and therefore science, which rests on the conviction that truth is more important than anything else, has its' origin in something other than utility. In the 'will to truth', or as he rephrases it, in the 'truth at any price' there is a great disutility and even dangerousness. The 'at any price' is the altar on which we have sacrificed faith after another. We need understand here that Nietzsche thinks of the untruth as an essential part of our understanding of the world. He thinks that those who are

truthful in the sense which faith in science presupposes end up affirming another world than that of life, nature, and history. The question that follows is, if this leads the ones affirming the 'other world' by the same token denying its counterpart, this world, our world? Nietzsche states that "it is still a *metaphysical faith* upon which our faith in science rests – that even we knowers of today, we godless antimetaphysicians, still take *our* fire, too, from the flame lit by the thousand-year old faith, the Christian faith which was also Plato's faith, that God is truth; that truth is divine". (Nietzsche 2001, 200-201)

In the chapter two on the debate about truth we touched upon the famous quote from Voltaire: "Those who can make you believe absurdities can make you commit atrocities". Voltaire's motto, as it happens, was 'écrasez l'infame!' – destroy the infamous thing (i.e. the Church).<sup>17</sup> Nietzsche thought that even theology in its' recent forms had placed itself in the service of the Voltairean motto. In the *Untimely Meditations* we can see that Nietzsche's ideas are very conflicting with what Voltaire strove to. Nietzsche sees illusions as something that give meaningfulness to our lives and thinks that if (e.g.) Christianity is studied merely as an historic object and stripped from the illusions it shall wither and die. He is saying that the historical treatment has denaturalized Christianity, until it is completely historical, and destroys it by resolving it into pure knowledge about Christianity. The same faith that Christianity has encountered, he thinks, awaits everything that possesses life when one starts practicing historical dissection to it. (Nietzsche 1997b, 95-97) "All living things require an atmosphere around them, a mysterious misty vapour; if they are deprived of this envelope, if a religion, an art, a genius is condemned to revolve as a star without atmosphere, we should no longer be surprised if they quickly wither and grow hard and unfruitful." (Ibid., 97) In the gay science Nietzsche talks about the ultimate doubt with a riddle; "what, then, are man's truths ultimately? - They are the *irrefutable* errors of man". (Nietzsche 2001, 151) The scientific will to truth strives to unveil our reality from the disguise of lies and illusions but Nietzsche thinks that while the science is, perhaps, effective in this unveiling it also strips our life of its' meaning. Take Christianity as an example and we see that the strive to unveil the truth behind the religious beliefs winds up destroying the authority behind our moral values and the faith to Christianity.<sup>18</sup> Nietzsche would most likely be the first person to praise this sort of development if the strive for truth would have something more meaningful to offer behind our values. Instead, he thinks that the faith in science and the will to

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<sup>17</sup> See e.g. Nietzsche 1997b, 96.

<sup>18</sup> It is not hard to see how this has manifested through the atheist tendencies and in form of a decline in the members of church.

truth share the same authority behind their unconditional valuation of truth as the Christian worldview did. He wants us to see that the faith in science is also standing on a moral ground.<sup>19</sup> In the *Genealogy of Morals* there is a section in which Nietzsche describes science as something that never creates values. He thinks that science is not independent enough in this way, that it needs a value-ideal, value-creating power behind it. (Nietzsche 2006b, 113) This value-creating power, as we have seen, is the same old metaphysical belief that the God is truth, that truth is divine (transcendent and omnipotent). We saw earlier how little Nietzsche gives respect to his contemporary scholars by saying that they end up denying the world of life while striving for the truth at any price. He gives another unflattering description of those scholars by describing the science as a means of self-anaesthetic or “a *hiding place* for all kinds of ill-humour, unbelief, gnawing worms, *despectio sui*,<sup>20</sup> bad conscience – it is the *disquiet* of the lack of ideals itself, the suffering from a *lack* of great love, the discontent over *enforced* contentedness.” (Ibid., 110) In the above passage the scholars are reduced to absconding advocates of bad conscience with “heads smoking night and day”. (Ibid) It is not hard to see that, even though, Nietzsche was a harsh critic of the Christianity, he thinks that, what followed the death of God is something even more repulsive. The world governed by the herd morality of Christians was for Nietzsche intrinsically nihilistic and the meaning of life lived by the Christian values might have been inverted. Life in the world that followed the murder of God with the idea of ‘truth at any price’, however, is life without meaning. If there is no illusion to give meaning in our lives the only thing that is left is nihilism.

The Voltairean kind of strive to avoid the illusions that may lead for us to do atrocities, according to Nietzsche, leads us straight into the abyss that deprives our life out of its’ meaning. If we express this in the same way as Harries’ defined the philosophical problem, we have lost our way about.<sup>21</sup> This is the fear in Nietzsche’s philosophy, these are the monsters that it shows to his readers. Let us follow Harries here and take the question what is man’s place, his ethos? to be the question with which philosophy stays alive. How can we hope to keep philosophy alive in the world where life is deprived of its’ meaning, in the world in which we are “straying as though through an infinite nothing”?<sup>22</sup> After God is dead and the authority behind our values and behind the truth has disappeared, Nietzsche is calling for the ‘revaluation of all values’, or as he rephrases it: a living declaration of war on and victory over all old concepts of ‘true’ and

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<sup>19</sup> See e.g. Nietzsche 2001, 201.

<sup>20</sup> ‘contempt of self’ (See Nietzsche 2006b, 110)

<sup>21</sup> See chapter 3.1.

<sup>22</sup> See the quote about the Death of God in chapter 3.3.

'untrue'. (Nietzsche 2005, 11) Even though our European culture is, according to Nietzsche, heading "towards a catastrophe like a river that wants to reach the end"<sup>23</sup>, he thinks that the same tradition that has driven us towards the catastrophe has given us the possibility to reach the furthest goals.

[...]the worst, most prolonged, and most dangerous of all errors to this day was a dogmatist's error, namely Plato's invention of pure spirit and the Good in itself. But now that it has been overcome, and Europe breathes a sigh of relief after this nightmare, and at least can enjoy a healthier – well – sleep, we, *whose task is wakefulness itself*, are the heirs to all the force cultivated through the struggle against this error. Of course: talking about spirit and the Good like Plato did meant standing truth on its head and disowning even *perspectivism*, which is the fundamental condition of all life. In fact, as physicians we could ask: "How could such a disease infect Plato, the most beautiful outgrowth of antiquity? Did the evil Socrates corrupt him after all? was Socrates in fact the corrupter of youth? did he deserve his hemlock?" – But the struggle against Plato, or, to use a clear and "popular" idiom, the struggle against the Christian-ecclesiastical pressure of millennia – since Christianity is Platonism for the "people" – has created a magnificent tension of spirit in Europe, the likes of which the earth has never known: with such a tension in our bow we can now shoot at the furthest goals. (Nietzsche 2002, Preface)

When Nietzsche is saying that the values are in need of revaluation and that we need to declare a war and victory over all old concepts of 'true' and 'untrue' it is not, as we have begun to learn from his colorful style, just a call for critical papers on these issues. It is a call for a comprehensive critique of what is philosophy and science. We have seen that Nietzsche paints the horror show of the European cultural heritage with a broad brush and without saving the colors. He does not talk about the semantics if it is true that Europe exists when he is stating that it is true that the truth has led the European culture (and in this the whole contemporary world) to the abyss of nihilism from which it might not survive. Instead he is calling for a comprehensive revaluation of our worldview and the basing values of that worldview. He thinks that the contemporary philosophy which stands on a purely scientific foundation is drastically impotent for the deed of such magnitude. It is the inverted valuation of values, the bad conscience, of Christianity and the world view created by the inverted values that in Nietzsche's mind needs revaluation. It is a sickness that needs to be cured.

In the preface for the *Gay Science* he says that, "I am still waiting for a philosophical *physician* in the exceptional sense of the term – someone who has set himself the task of pursuing the

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<sup>23</sup> See chapter 3.2.



problem of the total health of a people, time, race or of humanity - to summon the courage at last to push my suspicion to its limit and risk the proposition: what was at stake in all philosophizing hitherto was not at all 'truth' but rather something else - let us say health, future, growth, power, life ..." (Nietzsche 2001, 6) Nietzsche thinks that our world is in need of a cure and this cure is called *the great health*. This is an idea that will lead us to a whole new understanding of Nietzsche's philosophy. It is the idea that will give us the key to understand why his different styles of philosophizing are so important to understanding the content of what he is trying to tell us. We need understand that Nietzsche thought of his philosophy also as a method for curing himself from illness, he talks about his philosophy sometimes as more of psychology than philosophy. This gives an insight<sup>24</sup> to Nietzsche's philosophy which we will be arguing in chapter four, that Nietzsche understands the world that he is striking with his hammer through a "self-reflective" manner. He strikes the structures of our culture, society, philosophy, history, etc. with his hammer and finds the resonance in his own sickness or health through all the faculties of the understanding he has acquired. Let us first continue to explore the idea of the great health, the alleged cure from the sickness that our culture has encountered.

### 3.5 The Great Health

We started exploring Nietzsche through the ideas of Blackburn and even though he gives a quite summarized and one-sided description of Nietzsche's philosophy it suites our purpose here to start exploring the idea of great health through his introduction to the subject. Let us give here the developments of the 'true' world as Nietzsche gives it in *The Twilight of Idols* with a title *History of an Error* (also Blackburn gives this section in full in his work):

1. The true world, attainable for the wise, the devout, the virtuous—they live in it, *they are it*.

(Oldest form of the idea, relatively clever, simple, convincing. Paraphrase of the assertion, "I, Plato, *am* the truth.")

2. The true world, unattainable for now, but promised to the wise, the devout, the virtuous ("to the sinner who does penance").

(Progress of the idea: it becomes more refined, more devious, more mystifying—it *becomes woman*, it becomes Christian . . .)

3. The true world, unattainable, unprovable, unpromisable, but a consolation, an obligation, an imperative, merely by virtue of being thought.

(The old sun basically, but glimpsed through fog and skepticism; the idea become sublime, pallid, Nordic, Königsbergian.<sup>25</sup>)

4. The true world—unattainable? In any case, unattained. And if it is unattained, it is also *unknown*. And hence it is not consoling, redeeming,

<sup>24</sup> And I am hoping a new one in this.

<sup>25</sup> An allusion to Kant, who lived all his life in Königsberg, on the Baltic Sea. For Kant, it is impossible for us to know about "things in themselves"—including God, free will, and an immortal soul; however, rational morality obliges us to "postulate" such things. (See Nietzsche 1997, 23)

or obligating either; to what could something unknown obligate us? . . .

(Gray dawn. First yawnings of reason. Rooster's crow of positivism.)

5. The "true world"—an idea with no use anymore, no longer even obligating—an idea become useless, superfluous, *hence* a refuted idea: let's do away with it!

(Bright day; breakfast; return of *bon sens* [good sense] and cheerfulness; Plato blushes; pandemonium of all free spirits.)

6. We have done away with the true world: what world is left over? The apparent one, maybe? . . . But no! *Along with the true world, we have also done away with the apparent!*

(Midday; moment of the shortest shadow; end of the longest error; high point of humanity; INCIPIT ZARATHUSTRA.<sup>26</sup>)

(Nietzsche 1997, 23-24)

Earlier we have contemplated the developments in the above section from one to four. The first one being dogmatist's error by Plato, the second one is the Christianized Platonism, the third one is Kant's alternation of the Christianized Platonism and the fourth one is the scientific idea of 'truth at any cost' and the affirmation of the apparent world. We have also introduced Nietzsche's idea that even though our European culture is headed to the abyss of nihilism it can prevail. This new hope in the sections five and six are described by Blackburn in the following passage:

Then dawn breaks. We get a gradual realization that the idea of a metaphysical world is not needed even for this. The supernatural vision is useless, the 'true' world can be abolished. Does this leave us saying that there is only the 'apparent' world? No, for 'true' and 'apparent' live off each other. If one dies, the contrast dies with it. We should no longer go about pitying ourselves for being condemned to a superficial world, a world of mere appearance. For the idea of any other kind of world has been destroyed. The metaphysical contrast introduced by Plato is abolished, and the new man, the man who fully partakes in this revolution, the prophet of a new way of grasping life, Nietzsche's imagined hero Zarathustra, emerges. It is now up to us to give our lives meaning ourselves, and this creation means not only being human (which might mean, to remain in the grip of phantoms and fantasies) but being all-too-human: a being that fully and joyfully accepts the challenge of living in the full power of its faculties, the challenge of healthy living. (Blackburn 2005, 81-82)

Blackburn seems not to be impressed by Nietzsche's prediction for overcoming the problems that we have described earlier. The reason for this might be that in his declaration of overcoming the sickness that the world has encountered Nietzsche steps in to the area that from Blackburn's

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<sup>26</sup> "Here begins Zarathustra." This phrase echoes several passages in Nietzsche's earlier works. The title of the last section (§342) of the original edition of *The Gay Science* (1882) is *Incipit tragoedia* ("here begins the tragedy"). The text of this section is equivalent to the opening of Nietzsche's next book, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. In §1 of the preface to the second edition of *The Gay Science* (1887), Nietzsche suggests that *incipit parodia* ("here begins the parody") may also be an appropriate motto. (See Nietzsche 1997, 24)

perspective might seem non-philosophical. Karsten Harries has another take on the prediction that Nietzsche is putting forward and he is saying (echoing her definition of what makes discourse philosophical) that “hermeneutics has taught us that we cannot really understand the meaning of a part until we have grasped its place in the whole to which it belongs”. (Harries 1988, 24) According to her Nietzsche lets Zarathustra speak of things from the “condition” of great health that he himself was physically lacking. This is yet another controversy from Nietzsche: when Zarathustra talks from the condition of the great health, he is still sick of the spirit of revenge and trying to cure himself. The position of great health is an opposition to the state that Nietzsche saw as the prevalent one in the world. Great health stands “in opposition to the evil eye that has determined the shape of our culture and alienated us from ourselves”. The evil eye is the “will’s ill will against time and its ‘it was’” it is the spirit of revenge. The sickness is, however, seen as a stimulant to the great health, as Harries quotes Nietzsche: “That of which more delicate men would perish belongs to the stimulants of the *great health*.” Harries points out that the great health is associated with the tragedy that Nietzsche explored in the book *Birth of Tragedy*. The understanding of life through controversy is apparent in Nietzsche’s philosophy but also in his own life. The tragedy of his life was that he suffered from health issues throughout his adulthood and as Harries points out when he wrote the part where Zarathustra talks about the great health Nietzsche himself suffered from a bad period of his sickness.<sup>27</sup> She states that, “Nietzsche’s great health does not exclude suffering disease, and death. Just the opposite, it affirms and appropriates them.” (Ibid, 24-27) Harries argues against Danto in a more detailed manner when she talks about the spirit of revenge that the language of philosophy is governed by. This spirit of revenge is the same evil eye that stands in the opposition to the great health and the redemption is understood as an overcoming of the spirit of revenge. The spirit of revenge that faces the reality is the mode of existing that “has shaped not only religion but philosophy, and not only moral philosophy but metaphysics and the theory of knowledge, to the extent that these have thought being and truth to be against time.” (Ibid, 28) If we understand the above quote from Harries in the light of the developments we have been contemplating earlier, the significance of the great health becomes apparent for Nietzsche’s philosophy. It is exactly this great health that is needed for overcoming the sickness that has faced our world and even our philosophy. Here we need backtrack a bit and remind ourselves of the questions asked earlier through Harries’ remarks on Danto. The question was if Nietzsche really knew

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<sup>27</sup>It would be an interesting question to explore the physiological relation of Nietzsche’s own health to the different stages of his philosophy but unfortunately this is not the scope of this research. It is, however, important to keep in mind that Nietzsche himself used his philosophy also as a coping mechanism to his poor physical health. He thought that his philosophy had a psychological dimension to it. (See e.g. 2001, 4-5)

what he was trying to say? Let us quote Harries here in full to make it clear how she argues against Danto's statement:

The very language of philosophy is governed by the spirit of revenge. Consider once more Danto's suggestion that Nietzsche's language would have been less colorful had he known what he was trying to say. What do we mean when we say that someone knows what he is trying to say? Presupposed is a distinction between thought and its linguistic expression. To know something is to have grasped the truth of some thought. Inseparable from such knowledge is the knowledge that what I know does not need to be expressed in just this way. The special color of a discourse comes to be understood as an at best dispensable, more often distracting, ornament. Knowledge is best served by a discourse not so tied to the particular perspective of an individual or a group that, without it, it loses its meaning. So understood, knowledge demands objectivity, and objectivity demands translatability. Ideally, the medium of words should become totally transparent; language should be like clear glass so that it offers no resistance to the understanding as it appropriates what is to be understood. The "whiteness" of scientific discourse answers to this ideal. (Ibid, 28-29)

Harries is saying that the ideal talked about in the above quote prevents us from doing justice to language and it presupposes the evil eye from which the great health is a cure. The great health from which Zarathustra tells the riddle opens the possibility of a yes to time and all that is temporal. (Ibid, 24-29) Now, let us take the statement from Danto, that Nietzsche's language would have been less colorful assuming that he had known what he was saying, in the light of the last passage. Harries makes her view on the issue quite clear. That is, we should not criticize Nietzsche's philosophy from the basis of his colorful usage of language. It is not only the transparent language of science or the contemporary analytical philosophy that may claim shares from the philosophical discourse. Harries' partial answer to the question about, what makes a discourse philosophical, seems to be: if we want to give Nietzsche's philosophy a voice that escapes the "whiteness" of scientific discourse, voice that does justice to language we have to escape the evil eye by facing the monsters from another standpoint than that of analytic philosophy. She seems to take it that if the philosophical language is governed by the whiteness and transparency of true or false expressions and statements, we lose the possibility of debating about what is man's place. We can see that Harries is talking about the same thing that we earlier introduced as the unconditional will to truth, the appreciation of truth at any cost. The great health is also a cure for the philosophy that stands purely on the scientific foundation. Nietzsche thinks that "Whoever tries to place philosophy 'on a strictly scientific foundation', must first *stand on its head* not just philosophy, but also truth itself: the worst offence against decency which can occur in relation to two such respectable ladies!". (Nietzsche2006b, 112)

We have come a long way from the original debate about truth and it is time to get back on, what were our original questions, once again, to see if we have found any answers for those questions. First, let us take a short reflection about what has been developing on this path towards Nietzsche's understanding of the world. It has become clear that the debate about truth that holds its' meaningfulness (at least in some degree) in the contemporary academical philosophy is something that from Nietzsche's point of view is trivial. It might be argued here that from the point of view of the academic philosophy the same trivial nature applies to Nietzsche's philosophy. This, however, is not the purpose of this thesis. Instead the purpose is to explore the question if Nietzsche has something valuable to teach us from sailing those uncharted seas. We have gathered that Nietzsche saw the chase of truth, at least, in the sense of 'truth at any price' as one of the crucial errors for the European culture. The abolition of illusions that in his philosophy made us murder the greatest thing that has ever lived, God, has casted us to the wretched world with no meaning. Nietzsche still sees hope for overcoming the life that has lost its' meaning, overcoming the sickness and the abyss of nihilism that we are sliding into. The method for this is revaluating our values, revaluating what is true and truth itself, acquiring the state of great health. Keeping this path in mind we now turn to the questions that have been asked.

Let us first think about the quote from Voltaire that those who can make us believe absurdities, can make us commit atrocities. At first sight we might think that this idea is very useful in trying to liberate us from the illusions that might divert us to a path that we do not want to take. When the quote was originally introduced in this research there was also a question introduced related to it. The question was from Blackburn's introduction about Socrates thoughts and it was if we should admit the authority behind truth without knowing it? The question was introduced because of the concern that if we admit the authority behind truth without knowing it, we might end up believing in a truth that has a false or somehow perverted authority and end up doing atrocities. We have seen that Nietzsche thinks that exactly what was Voltaire's concern has happened through the unconditional will to truth and the aspiration to dispel the illusions. The life has lost its' direction, its' meaning and its' color through the demand of transparency. This is the reason for Nietzsche's call for the revaluation of all values and the revaluation of truth and philosophy itself. He is saying that life is not an argument; that the

conditions of life might include error.<sup>28</sup> The colorful expression of Nietzsche's philosophy has been argued by Harries to be an important part of his works because of what he wanted to stand for. The possibility for human to realize themselves as beings that accept the idea of healthy living while facing the sickness of the spirit of revenge. Nietzsche himself understood well the controversy in his writings and he did not expect to be understood for a long time to come, he thought that some people are born posthumously.<sup>29</sup> Harries is saying that there is something important tied to that controversy, his colorful usage of different styles. We have explored arguments for the idea that it is exactly the nature of Nietzsche's philosophy that gives it the meaningfulness that it holds in the contemporary philosophy. Now that we have gathered what Nietzsche thinks about truth and its' value, it is time to explore how Nietzsche hoped for us to be able to understand the world. In the next chapter we will open ourselves to the essential part of this thesis. We will explore what it meant for Nietzsche to understand the world with all the color in it, to experience life with the full faculties of its' meaning. It is the tragic understanding that we turn our gaze upon in purpose of finding a more comprehensive way of interpreting Nietzsche.

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<sup>28</sup> "*Life not an argument.* - We have arranged for ourselves a world in which we are able to live - by positing bodies, lines, planes, causes and effects, motion and rest, form and content; without these articles of faith no one could endure living! But that does not prove them. Life is not an argument; the conditions of life might include error." (Nietzsche 2001, 117)

<sup>29</sup> "I am one thing, my writings are another. - Before turning to them, I will touch on the question of their intelligibility or unintelligibility. I will do this with all the carelessness it warrants: because the time has certainly not come for this question. The time has not come for me either. Some people are born posthumously. (Nietzsche 2005, 99-100)

## 4. Tragedy

If we think of our original debate about truth in the light of what Nietzsche has been echoing, it is not clear anymore that truth is something we should chase, perhaps the opposite. The debate about truth, as we have seen, seems to make the debate even more complex and overwhelming instead of clarifying the problems. The controversial nature of Nietzsche's philosophy has shown that there are different ways of doing philosophy which might not need transparency and the validation of truth to be meaningful. The question that we asked in the beginning was, can we admit to the authority of truth without knowing what truth is? The dangers of admitting to an authority without knowing it thoroughly were earlier shown to be very real. Let us think of the original debate between the absolutist and the relativist. We might say that the absolutist faith for the authority of reason (i.e. the stamp of truth) leaves us exposed to the dangers that the dispelling of illusions was supposed to save us from. Nietzsche's answer to the question above might be that we should most certainly be careful in admitting to the authority of truth without knowing it. Instead, we need revaluation of our way of understanding the world in the essential aspects of our life, i.e., the aspects we think we should value. If we accept the challenge of living in the full power of its faculties, we accept the controversy of not knowing truth and still saying yes to living. We need to forget the irrelevant debate about truth and concentrate on what it means to understand the world even through its' hardest manifestations. It is the tragic nature of our wretched human lives that we need to embrace instead of escaping to the meaningless reflection of what we call the facts or truths. With our heads smoking all night for the hope of reaching some sort of partial truth.

Harries points out in his article that in the *Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche "sought to locate the roots of the ills of our age in Socrates' optimistic embrace of both reason and the ideal of satisfaction and looked both backward and forward to tragedy as to a cure"<sup>30</sup>. She also states that the section of Nietzsche's *Gay Science* that is written under the title of 'Great health' shows that this cure from the spirit of revenge is related to the tragedy. This is clearly shown by how that section ends in the words: "The tragedy begins". (Harries 1998, 26) Nietzsche himself referred to the birth of tragedy as his first revaluation of values. "*The Birth of Tragedy* was my first revaluation of all values: thus I take my stand again upon the ground from which grows my willing, my being *able*—I, the final follower of the philosopher Dionysus—I, the teacher of the

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<sup>30</sup> See Harries 1998, 26.

eternal recurrence...” (Nietzsche 1997, 91) We have explored the arguments that Nietzsche’s philosophy should be read through its’ stylistic aspects as much as, or primary to, its’ content. This means that his philosophy should not be reduced to mere quotes and interpretations of partial sections because this would cut out its’ colour; it would “castrate” his meaningfulness. It is the main aspect of this thesis that the tragic understanding is something that runs inseparably through Nietzsche’s philosophy. This is clearly seen in the above quote from Nietzsche where he elevates himself as the “final follower (disciple) of the philosopher Dionysus”<sup>31</sup>. Here we take the position that the tragic understanding is an essential aspect of Nietzsche’s philosophy and therefore it is also essential in understanding the style and the content of his philosophy as comprehensively as possible.

The purpose of this chapter is to tie together the ideas that have been developing throughout the thesis. In this purpose we will start by introducing Nietzsche’s understanding of tragedy and his tragic understanding. We will need also to backtrack a bit to Blackburn’s notions about a doctrine that has grown from Nietzsche’s idea that there is only perspective seeing, namely *perspectivism*. This doctrine will be introduced to create a better contrast in between the traditional academic approach of reading Nietzsche and a more comprehensive (some might say forgiving) one. In the final section of this chapter the purpose is to introduce Nietzsche’s ideas about the new philosophers. In this way we will finally reach some degree of understanding about what the monstrous readers of Nietzsche’s monstrous texts should face if they want to learn about his teaching of eternal recurrence.

#### **4.1 *Birth of Tragedy***

Nietzsche thinks that humankind need embrace the tragedy of life to have a hope of overcoming the evil eye. We need to embrace the tragedy to overcome the will’s ill will against time and its’ ‘it was’, the great nausea, *nihilism*. Nietzsche calls us to admit to life even on the verge of its’ greatest terrors and horrors.<sup>32</sup> In the *Birth of Tragedy* he describes the realization of the terror of human life through a “popular Greek wisdom” in the following manner:

Yet we must call out to this spectator who has already turned away: ‘Do not go away, but listen first to what popular Greek wisdom has to say about this inexplicably serene existence you see spread out before you here.’ An ancient legend recounts how King Midas hunted long in the forest for the wise *Silenus*, companion of Dionysus, but failed

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<sup>31</sup> Dionysus, as we will see in this chapter, is a vital ingredient of the tragedy as Nietzsche understands it.

<sup>32</sup> See chapter 3.5.



to catch him. When Silenus has finally fallen into his hands, the King asks what is the best and most excellent thing for human beings. Stiff and unmoving, the daemon remains silent until, forced by the King to speak, he finally breaks out in shrill laughter and says: 'Wretched, ephemeral race, children of chance and tribulation, why do you force me to tell you the very thing which it would be most profitable for you not to hear? The very best thing is utterly beyond your reach not to have been born, not to be, to be nothing. However, the second best thing for you is: to die soon.' (Nietzsche 2007, 22-23)

Nietzsche asks a question: "How does the world of Olympian gods relate to this piece of popular wisdom?" And the answer is that, "the relationship is that of the ecstatic vision of a tortured martyr to his torments". Here we get an insight of what Nietzsche thought about the understanding that the Greeks had about their existence. He states that the Olympians were dream-born figures placed in front of the terrors and horrors of existence that the Greeks knew. It is the Hellenic will's extreme sensitivity, stormy desires and the unique gift for suffering that demanded gods to justify the life of men by living it themselves. (Ibid, 23-24) Nietzsche thinks that the Greeks understood something that "our European culture" has forgotten; the existence with all its terrors and horrors, man's place. Harries states that "the power that the spirit of revenge has over us is rooted in the temporality that constitutes our being, shadowing it with sad thoughts of losing all that we can call our own, even ourselves". The world we are cast into is something we have not chosen and are finding it difficult to accept ourselves as we are. Especially difficult is to accept our corporality and what is intimately tied to it, such as sexual desire, hunger, disease and death, because these remind us of our temporality. The idea is that we cannot stand the lack of power that we have in our reality and that is why we turn against that reality and in this way also against ourselves. We have a need to escape the tyranny of time and this is how the spirit of revenge gives a birth to another reality over which time has no power. Harries also points out that if Nietzsche is right, the origin of most religion and philosophy may be located here. (Harries 1988, 27) We saw earlier that this "illusion", or "semblance" of reality is something that the great health tries to cure us from. The yes saying to life, that Nietzsche wants to herald through the character of Zarathustra, is the understanding that we are living in a world where we are not masters for ourselves and that being and truth is not against time. It is that temporal reality where we suffer and die that we need to be able to live in if we want to open the eyes of our civilization for the uncharted seas. In this realization there is no ideal or absolute truth, there is the temporal reality in which the tidal wave may swipe away our boat at any given instance and yet we choose to sail those seas.

The more I become aware of those all-powerful artistic drives in nature, and of a fervent longing in them for semblance<sup>33</sup>, for their redemption and release in semblance, the more I feel myself driven to the metaphysical assumption that that which truly exists, the eternally suffering and contradictory, primordial unity, simultaneously needs, for its constant release and redemption, the ecstatic vision, intensely pleasurable semblance. We, however, who consist of and are completely trapped in semblance, are compelled to feel this semblance to be that which truly is not, i.e. a continual Becoming in time, space, and causality - in other words, empirical reality. If we ignore for a moment our own 'reality' and if we take our empirical existence, and indeed that of the world in general, to be a representation (*Vorstellung*) generated at each moment by the primordial unity, we must now regard dream as the *semblance of the semblance* and thus as a yet higher satisfaction of the original desire for semblance. It is for this very reason that the inner- most core of nature takes indescribable pleasure in the naive artist and the naive work of art which is also only the 'semblance of semblance'. (Nietzsche 2007, 25-26)

Nietzsche builds the birth of tragedy around the notion that the Dionysiac and the Apolline tendencies “dominated the Hellenic world by a succession of ever-new births and by a process of reciprocal intensification”. The reduction of semblance to semblance is the primal process of the naïve artist and the Apolline culture. Through Raphael’s painting *Transfiguration* Nietzsche sees “a reflection of the eternal primal pain, the only ground of the world; here ‘semblance’ is a ‘reflection’ of the eternal contradiction, the father of all things”. From this semblance rises something new, a blissful new world of semblance – of which the ones that are trapped in the first semblance have no clue. This new semblance of semblance is free of all pain and from this highest symbolism of art Nietzsche finds the Apolline world of beauty, but also the terrifying wisdom of Silenus on which that world rests. “At the same time we encounter Apollo as the deification of the *principium individuationis*<sup>34</sup> in which alone the eternally attained goal of the primordial unity, its release and redemption through semblance, comes about; with sublime gestures he shows us that the whole world of agony is needed in order to compel the individual to generate the releasing and redemptive vision and then, lost in contemplation of that vision, to sit calmly in his rocking boat in the midst of the sea.” (Ibid, 26-28) The tragic nature of the realization that we cannot reach the “primordial unity” explains the wisdom of Silenus quoted earlier. The eternal primal pain of something lost comes about with the understanding that it is impossible to grasp the true nature of things outside the semblance of our reality. The coping mechanism of the Apolline culture for this eternal pain is to build yet another world of semblance on top of the semblance and through that process to experience the redemption of the pain that the feeling of the unreachable primordial unity inflicts. Nietzsche associates the

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<sup>33</sup> In other translations the “semblance” is replaced with the words appearance (See Nietzsche 2018, 36) or illusion (See Nietzsche 1993, 25).

<sup>34</sup> The principle of individuation.

wisdoms; 'Know thyself' and 'Not too much', to the Apolline sphere. On the one hand the Apolline Greek felt the effect aroused by the Dionysiac to be similar for the 'titanic' or the 'barbaric' world that preceded the Apolline culture of beauty. Nietzsche continues that the Apolline Greek also was inwardly related "to those overthrown Titans and heroes. Indeed he was bound to feel more than this: his entire existence, with all its beauty and moderation, rested on a hidden ground of suffering and knowledge which was exposed to his gaze once more by the Dionysiac. And behold! Apollo could not live without Dionysos." Nietzsche refers to the Apolline world as the dammed-up world founded on semblance and measure. The Dionysiac is the ecstatic sound of festival that breaks through that serene world of beauty. It is the Dionysiac art "which, in its intoxication, spoke the truth; the wisdom of Silenus called out 'Woe, woe!' to the serene Olympians". In other words, the Dionysiac reveals the semblance of the Apolline culture to itself. (Ibid, 27) Nietzsche describes a view of the world where the primordial unity has been lost for the semblance but the Dionysiac aspect of the world gives a glimpse behind that semblance.

The tragic understanding that Nietzsche thought of as the cure to the wills' ill will towards life itself is described in the birth of tragedy through the life of the Greeks and their Olympian gods. The recurrence, that Nietzsche thought of himself as a teacher of, manifests through the interplay between the Apolline semblance and the Dionysiac exposure of the semblance. The idea in this thesis is that the tragic understanding is something of an encompassing attitude that Nietzsche has in his philosophy. The description that he gives in his *Birth of Tragedy* about the tragedy of the life of Greeks is something that he felt of himself experiencing. Earlier we talked about Harries' idea that Nietzsche was talking about the great health as a cure to the sickness when he himself was lacking the health. Let us remind ourselves of Harries' definition of a philosophical problem that was the question of what is ones' place, his ethos? Thinking of this definition we may raise here a philosophical problem that arouses from Nietzsche's philosophy, what is his ethos? To answer this question let us backtrack for a bit to explore the idea from Nietzsche that has grown into a doctrine in itself, the idea that we may only see through a perspective.

## 4.2 Perspectivism

Blackburn tackles various aspects of Nietzsche's philosophy in his book and he introduces the ideas related to truth and illusion in several occasions. Let us take under exploration one of the essential ideas that in Blackburn's book comes after what may be called Nietzsche's critique of metaphysics.<sup>35</sup> He starts with a famous quote from Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morality* to introduce the idea that has grown up to its' own doctrine, namely *perspectivism*:

From now on, my philosophical colleagues, let us be more wary of the dangerous old conceptual fairy-tale which has set up a 'pure, will-less, painless, timeless, subject of knowledge', let us be wary of the tentacles of such contradictory concepts as 'pure reason', 'absolute spirituality', 'knowledge as such': – here we are asked to think an eye which cannot be thought at all, an eye turned in no direction at all, an eye where the active and interpretative powers are to be suppressed, absent, but through which seeing still becomes a seeing-something, so it is an absurdity and non-concept of eye that is demanded. There is *only* a perspectival seeing, *only* a perspectival 'knowing'; the *more* affects we are able to put into words about a thing, the *more* eyes, various eyes we are able to use for the same thing, the more complete will be our 'concept' of the thing, our 'objectivity'. But to eliminate the will completely and turn off all the emotions without exception, assuming we could: well? would that not mean to *castrate* the intellect? (Nietzsche 2006b, 87)

Blackburn argues that the above section traps us inside a perspective or a 'version' and that this might lead us to the melancholy notion that our knowledge is only partial. He continues that other philosophers than Nietzsche have found it easy to make a jump from this to the notion that it is not even partial knowledge we may reach, it is not knowledge at all, but fiction or illusion. Blackburn goes on to give the perspective a scientific notion that involves the functions of what is the physical dimensions of using more eyes to observe one thing. It would be like changing the point of view we have to things in an extremely fast speed and the result would only be a blurred vision to the "object" we are trying to perceive in this manner: "It would smear and blur and fail when the displacement exceeded the speed of processing. It would stop being information at all." Blackburn later argues that even though perspective might alert us to the partial nature of our truths it is not a radical idea to claim that we can only get a partial truth. He argues that this is visible in for example the idea that history is always written from a point of view. (Blackburn 2005, 85-87) Blackburn goes on to explore the idea of perspectivism all the way to the possibility for denial of truth and to a radical skepticism or relativism.<sup>36</sup> Here we have

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<sup>35</sup> See chapter 3.

<sup>36</sup> See Blackburn 2005, 88-92.

to stop and raise a question, if it is possible to think of Nietzsche's notions about what is called perspectivism from a more comprehensive point of view?

In the introduction to Nietzsche's work *Beyond Good and Evil* the editor Rolf-Peter Horstman brings up quite well the problem of attempting to integrate Nietzsche's intellectual products to traditional academic philosophy. Horstman talks about the same problem that we have earlier seen argued by Karsten Harries' that if we try to interpret Nietzsche from a certain paradigm, that interpretation might leave us missing out something essential from his philosophy. What Horstman is talking about is "what might be called the "socio-hermeneutical" dimension of what has become known as his (Nietzsche's) doctrine of "perspectivism""<sup>37</sup>. Horstman introduces the simple reading of perspectivism to be the following: "our view of the world and, consequently, the statements we take to be true, depend on our situation, on our "perspective" on the world"<sup>38</sup>. This sort of understanding of the claim "gives rise to the epistemological thesis that our knowledge claims can never be true in an absolute or an objective sense, partly because of the necessary spatial and temporal differences between the viewpoints that each knower is bound to occupy when relating to an object, and also because of the fact that we can never be certain that what appears to us to be the case really is the case"<sup>39</sup>. Horstman points out that many critical readers of Nietzsche are taking his perspectival conception of truth to endorse three statements that are: "(1) there is no absolute or objective truth; (2) what is taken to be truth is nothing but a fiction, that is, a perspectival counterfeit or forgery (*Fälschung*) of what really is the case; and (3) claims (1) and (2) are true". (Horstman 2002, xx-xxii) This seems to be somewhat the critical aspect also in Blackburn's exploration of Nietzsche's ideas about truth and, as Horstman points out, it is easy to see that this sort of reasoning leads to the paradoxical claim that it is true that there is no truth. Let us now think of another way of reading the idea of perspectivism. Horstman thinks that we may find a more comprehensive way of reading Nietzsche's theory of truth if we think of the basic simple reading of the perspectivism in a different light of two summarized conditions:

(1) In order to understand a claim for truth embodied in an expression, one has to have an understanding of the situation from which that claim originates, and this presupposes being acquainted with and involved in the personal attitudes, subjective experiences, and private evaluations which form the basis of the view expressed. (2)

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<sup>37</sup> See Horstman 2002, xx.

<sup>38</sup> See Ibid., xxi.

<sup>39</sup> See Ibid.

In order to judge the correctness, or perhaps merely the plausibility, of such a claim, one has to have an experiential or existential background similar to that of the person who made the claim. (Ibid., xxi-xxii)

This is what Horstman calls the “socio-hermeneutical” reading of perspectivism and if we think of Nietzsche’s theory of truth in this light, Horstman argues, we find it independent of the issue if Nietzsche really subscribes to the preceding, three staged, paradoxical argument. Horstman continues that:

On this interpretation, Nietzsche’s theory claims only (1) that there are no context-free truths, where a context is to be defined as the set of subjective conditions that the utterer of a truth is governed by and that anyone who wishes correctly to judge it is able to apprehend.<sup>40</sup> It also claims (2) that as an utterer or judge of a truth we are never in a position to be familiar with a context in its entirety, that is, with all the conditions that define it, and therefore we have to settle for an incomplete version of a context where the degree of incompleteness depends on differences between our capacities to understand ourselves and others. From this it follows (3) that, given our situation, every truth is defined by this necessarily incomplete context. Thus every truth is a partial truth or a perspectival fiction. (Ibid., xxii-xxiii)

Nietzsche is not saying that there is no truth. Instead he is suggesting that we have no way of grasping the whole truth. Even though the relativist or skeptics might have taken parts of Nietzsche’s philosophy and used them to enforce their own denial of truth we need not look far to see how much resentment Nietzsche had for skepticism. Reading the section in *Beyond Good and Evil* where Nietzsche describes the skeptics gives a perfectly good picture about what he thought of them. It is almost three pages of extremely descriptive exploration of the defects of skepticism where he is saying for example: “But what is most profoundly sick and degenerate about such hybrids is the *will*: they no longer have any sense of independence in decision-making, or the bold feeling of pleasure in willing, – they doubt whether there is “freedom of will,” even in their dreams.” (Nietzsche 2002, 100) The objections and refutations against Nietzsche are endless and tackling them one by one makes no sense. In many cases the objections lack the understanding that Nietzsche’s stylistic methods are not to be taken apart from the content. They lack the understanding that Nietzsche is not giving us truths nor untruths in the sense that traditional academic philosophy is trying to comprehend them. With his stylistic features and tragic understanding, he is trying to teach us a method for overcoming the sickness that he thinks our philosophical tradition has assimilated. He is saying that the philosophers should

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<sup>40</sup> Put a bit more bluntly, this claim amounts to the assertion that the concept “objective or absolute truth” is an empty concept when understood in contraposition to “perspectival truth.” (See Horstman 2002, xxii)

become something more and this is what he tries to teach us: “they will be free, *very* free spirits<sup>41</sup>, these philosophers of the future – and that they certainly will not *just* be free spirits, but rather something more, higher, greater, and fundamentally different, something that does not want to be misunderstood or mistaken for anything else”. (Ibid., 40) Nietzsche wants to herald the new philosophers that will have no limitations in which the free spirits (the heralders of new philosophers) are still bound with. (Ibid.) In *Beyond Good and Evil* there is a section which clearly expresses that Nietzsche thinks that there is some kind of a truth but he wants the philosophers to understand that truth does not need them as its’ defenders:

Stand tall, you philosophers and friends of knowledge, and beware of martyrdom! Of suffering “for the sake of truth”! Even of defending yourselves! You will ruin the innocence and fine objectivity of your conscience, you will be stubborn towards objections and red rags, you will become stupid, brutish, bullish if, while fighting against danger, viciousness, suspicion, ostracism, and even nastier consequences of animosity, you also have to pose as the worldwide defenders of truth. As if “the Truth” were such a harmless and bungling little thing that she needed defenders! (Nietzsche 2002, 26)

We have seen how getting familiar with the debate about the nature of truth in the traditional academic framework may leave us more puzzled about what is truth than before getting acquainted with the debate in the first place. Therefore, this research aimed for finding another way of understanding the debate than that of the traditional academic philosophy. We have explored Nietzsche’s thoughts through several different philosophers. This exploration shows that his philosophy tries to give us an understanding of what are the major problems in the European culture. There is no doubt that we may criticize Nietzsche’s philosophical content from many different aspects. However, many critics of his philosophy lack the will to understand that Nietzsche operates in totally different realm than the usual theoretical framework in philosophy expects. This might be a reason for some philosophers to regard his ideas meaningless for philosophy but, as we have seen in Blackburn’s research, Nietzsche’s great influence in our contemporary philosophy begs to differ. His philosophy may generally be viewed as highly critical towards all existing structures, be they philosophical, societal or even political (etc.). We have shown the critical essence of his philosophy to have its’ roots in what he thought of as the greatest error till our time, “Plato’s invention of pure spirit and the Good in

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<sup>41</sup> In German: *der freie Geist*. I have generally rendered *Geist* and words using *Geist* (such as *geistig*, *Geistigkeit*) as “spirit” and words using spirit (so: spiritual and spirituality). However, *Geist* is a broader term than spirit, meaning mind or intellect as well. (See Nietzsche 2002, 25)

itself”<sup>42</sup>. Nietzsche talks about a long line of errors in our history and this, combined to his colourful and gloomy usage of language and different styles, may create his readers an extremely negative picture of him and his philosophy. Understanding Nietzsche as a negative philosopher (or even a nihilist himself) would, however, be a great error. If we think of him as a negative philosopher, we are neglecting all together that, in fact, he heralds the overcoming of all the problems that our civilization is facing. We might even go so far as calling his philosophy *romantic* in this aspect. We might even criticize him for his overly positive attitude in overcoming the problems of our civilization. The purpose of next chapter is to tie together the strands from Nietzsche’s philosophy that have been introduced and to explore the more positive side of his philosophy.

### 4.3 *Philosophers of the Future*

In his book *Beyond Good and Evil* Nietzsche gives his prediction about what the new philosophers might be like:

Are they new friends of “truth,” these upcoming philosophers? Probably, since all philosophers so far have loved their truths. But they certainly will not be dogmatists. It would offend their pride, as well as their taste, if their truth were a truth for everyone (which has been the secret wish and hidden meaning of all dogmatic aspirations so far). “My judgment is *my* judgment: other people don’t have an obvious right to it too” – perhaps this is what such a philosopher of the future will say. (Nietzsche 2002, 40)

From the point of view of our original debate between absolutist and relativist this sort of truth seems absurdity, as Voltaire might say. Here we need, however, forget the original debate and see if it is possible to find the understanding that Nietzsche thought that the heralders of the new philosophers, the free spirits share. We have seen that Nietzsche thought of himself as one of the free spirits and in this we need turn to his understanding to define that of the free spirit. If we consider the tragic nature of Nietzsche’s understanding, we find it that the source for the suffering is the loss of the primordial unity<sup>43</sup>. The Dionysiac aspect of tragedy may be understood as inflicting the suffering because it is the source for the grasp that we have lost the primordial unity. Here we need understand, however, that Nietzsche thought of the suffering as something that is always presupposed by every art and every philosophy because these are considered as a cure from suffering or for sufferers. (Nietzsche 2001, 234) We have seen how

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<sup>42</sup> See chapter 3.4.

<sup>43</sup> See chapter 3.1.



the conception of great health spurs from Nietzsche's philosophy when he himself is suffering from sickness and needs a cure. In the introduction to the *Gay Science* Nietzsche describes how he has benefitted from his erratic health and that perhaps all the great philosophers have been sick. (Nietzsche 2001, 3-6) It is also the tragic nature of his own life that he draws his philosophical understanding from. He uses philosophy and all the faculties of his understanding as something that is a cure from the sickness that he himself is suffering. When we think of this combined to the Horstman's take on what has evolved to be known as the doctrine of *perspectivism* we have a new insight of how Nietzsche philosophizes. He lets his critical hammer fall upon the sick and healthy structures equally and lets the resonance reflect from his own sickness and health to find what is in tune<sup>44</sup>. There is no shame in the temporality of being and we need embrace the life in sickness as well as in health. The tragic understanding is an understanding that does not yield in face of suffering, it is "a formula of the highest affirmation born out of fullness, out of overfullness, an unreserved yea-saying even to suffering, even to guilt, even to everything questionable and strange about existence . . . This final, most joyful, effusive, high-spirited yes to life". (Nietzsche 2005, 109) Nietzsche thinks that it is not an easy thing to withstand the truth, he says "the strength of a spirit would be proportionate to how much of the "truth" he could withstand – or, to put it more clearly, to what extent he *needs* it to be thinned out". (Nietzsche 2002, 38) Nietzsche looks to the new philosophers as being strong enough to withstand truth and to initiate the revaluation and reversal of eternal values. (Ibid., 91)) The new philosopher will not only initiate the revaluation of the values but create new ones. (Ibid., 105)

Let us once more get back to how Harries defined the nature of a philosophical problem in the chapter 3.1, "I don't know my way about". He argued that philosophy stays alive only as long as the question, What is man's place, his ethos? continues to be asked.<sup>45</sup> If this is how we define the philosophical problem, we need derive the conclusion that Nietzsche's tragic understanding answers to that question with the most comprehensive possible way. It does not only strive to understand the ethos, but it strives to understand the ethos in all the faculties that might be dismissed without the tragic saying yes to life even in its' hardest manifestations. Nietzsche is saying that this is what he wants his readers to learn. This is what the free spirits, the heralders of the new philosophers need learn to have the understanding needed for being the bridge to overcome the problems of our civilization. Nietzsche lets Zarathustra speak the words about

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<sup>44</sup> To use Blackburn's expression of the tuning fork here.

<sup>45</sup> See chapter 3.1.

what his sincere hope is for the humankind in another, well known, but in many cases misunderstood quote:

“I love all those who are like heavy drops falling individually from the dark cloud that hangs over humanity: they herald the coming of the lightning, and as heralds they perish. Behold, I am a herald of the lightning and a heavy drop from the cloud: but this lightning is called overman.” (Nietzsche 2006a, 9)

## 5. Conclusion

In the beginning of this thesis the basing research question was set to be, if we can admit to the authority of truth without possessing the truth? This question was raised from the Voltairean fear that if we are made to believe in absurdities, we may end up committing atrocities. It has been a long path that the research has taken to answer this question. We explored the basic debate about truth, through Blackburn's great effort in the area, by going through the different problems. We covered the *Recoil Argument*, *Moving Bull's Eye*, *Ishmael's problem*, *Correspondence Theory of Truth*, *Minimalists and Moral Relativists*. Still, the debate seemed to make the confusion about the nature of truth even greater. Blackburn stated that the questions raised by the debate are all visual in Nietzsche's philosophy and the research turned to exploration of his ideas in hope of better answers. The statement that encouraged the research to further exploration of Nietzsche was that Nietzsche believes that there is no truth. Blackburn was saying that Nietzsche makes statements where he claims that e.g. "the English philosophers are vulgar, and the French philosophers are not better".<sup>46</sup> The question from Blackburn was how can he state that it is true that there is such place as England or France and at the same time say that there is no truth or that the truth is an illusion?<sup>47</sup>

In the purpose of finding answers to the questions that the debate about truth left unanswered the research turned to different interpretations of Nietzsche than that of Blackburn's. It was shown through the exploration of Nietzsche's ideas that he indeed has a grasp of truth and that he believes that there is truth. The problem in Nietzsche's philosophy was shown to be the controversial nature that derives from his colourful usage of different styles and language. We saw that this aspect of Nietzsche's philosophy is, however, an intrinsic part of it and that we need understand his philosophical style to understand what he is saying. Nietzsche saw that the problem of truth is that of the unconditional will to truth and this is a result of a long line of errors that he traced all the way back to Plato's dogmatist error: "the invention of pure spirit and Good in itself".<sup>48</sup> Nietzsche claims that through Christianization and Kantian intellectualization of Christianity the error that has its' roots in Plato has transmitted all the way to our times. It was shown how the error for Nietzsche is the invention of true world

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<sup>46</sup> See chapter 2.6.

<sup>47</sup> See chapter 2.6.

<sup>48</sup> See chapter 3.4.

that exists outside our grasp, the world that is transcendent. It was argued that he saw the long line of errors taking its' crystallized form when the will to truth and the aspiration to dispel the illusions lead for the act of killing God. Here we get some grasp on what Nietzsche thought of the question if we should admit to the authority of truth without possessing it? Nietzsche would say that this is exactly what has been done and therefore we have stripped our lives from meaning by dispelling the illusions that bring the colour in our lives. The fear for Nietzsche was shown to be, what would become after the God is dead and there is no authority behind our values to rely on. Nietzsche thought that the truth gets its' validation from the same place that the authority of God did, from faith. According to Nietzsche we still validate our actions by what he called the herd morality of Christianity but there is no more the illusion of afterlife that we would reach by obeying the rules. There is no meaning behind the validation of our actions. In this we have been cast to the life that is governed by the bad conscience and the soothsaying of the scientific truth seekers. This sickness was shown to be the reason behind Nietzsche's demand for the revaluation of values and the revaluation of the value of truth itself. The idea of *great health* was introduced as Nietzsche's solution for a cure from the sickness that has befallen on our civilization. Thinking of Nietzsche's critical philosophy, we may argue that the debate about truth is irrelevant because the conception of truth is misguided by two millennium long line of errors. This makes also the question that Blackburn asks about Nietzsche's commitments to truth according to the England and France trivial.

Even though Nietzsche was highly critical towards the existing structures and he was painting a colourful picture of the problems of our civilization we have shown that his philosophy is in no way negative (or most definitely not nihilistic). Instead the research aimed to give an understanding of Nietzsche's positive prediction that the problems that our civilization is facing may be overcome. One of the main aspects in Nietzsche's philosophy was argued to be the tragic understanding. This is an understanding that is behind the great health and it is the yes saying to life in all its' faculties. The tragic understanding is something that Nietzsche himself said to have reached at least in some degree. He refers to himself as the last follower of the tragic God Dionysus and the teacher of eternal recurrence.<sup>49</sup> In the chapter four it was shown how Nietzsche uses the tragic understanding combined to the Horstman introduced comprehensive idea of perspectivism to philosophize. With this method he was able to realize which of our societal structures suffer of the sickness and which ones are healthy, which ones are in tune and

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<sup>49</sup> See chapter 4.

which ones are not.<sup>50</sup> The final argument in this thesis is that we need to have a more comprehensive method for understanding our surroundings and our place, our ethos, if we want to be the readers that Nietzsche deserves. We need the tragic understanding if we want to be the heralds of the new philosophers who will overcome the problems of our civilization.

Nietzsche has been called with many names and he has as many interpretations as he has readers. It may be called a defect but here we take a stand that it is his strength in the sense that he stands by the more comprehensive understanding of what has become known as the doctrine named perspectivism. We may criticize the doctrines that have been derived from Nietzsche as for example perspectivism, but that sort of critics does not necessarily apply to Nietzsche himself. Nietzsche was himself a hard critic of all the surrounding structures and we have shown that his style of philosophizing was to bang his critical hammer to virtually everything that he could lay his hands on. It does not mean that he thought that everything is out of order but as we saw from the dialogue between the diamond and the kitchen coal, quoted from *Zarathustra*, he thought that if something is worth appreciating for it needs to withstand the weight of his critical hammer. The main subject of the research was the nature of truth and we have seen that Nietzsche does not deny the existence of truth. Instead he urges us to reevaluate why we value truth and to think if our contemporary understanding of truth is comprehensive enough to be worth of this valuation. Nietzsche has a very colourful way of saying what he is saying but this is an intrinsic part of his philosophy that has grown out of the demand of his readers to be able to withstand the same self-criticism that he applied to himself. This is part of the tragic understanding that demands us to laugh on the verge of the abyss and dance facing the hardships of our lives.

Travelling through this tragic path full of resentment and critical thinking has sometimes almost had the power to force this reader of Nietzsche to give up all hope for humanity. Observing the surrounding societal structures, also long periods of time and in the further parts, of our ever faster changing and happily globalized world has not helped the overwhelming concern of the direction of humankind. Having some level of understanding of what has been defined as the tragic understanding in this thesis has however saved the writer to write another day. It is the view of this thesis that it has contributed for the understanding of Nietzsche's philosophy in the thorough going aspect of tragedy in his thinking and Nietzsche's usage of the

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<sup>50</sup> To use Blackburns expression. (See chapter 3.)

tragic understanding as a method of philosophizing. The pessimistic idea of the writer is, however, that virtually all research is a reference of a reference. Therefore, it is the sincere hope that there is strength and possibilities to continue this research later to explore what sort of uncharted seas may still be drawn from Nietzsche, if any.

“And let each day be a loss to us on which we did not dance once! And let each truth be false to us which was not greeted by one laugh!” (Nietzsche 2006a, 169)

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